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MEMOIRS
OF
HYPPOLITE CLAIRON,

THE CELEBRATED FRENCH ACTRESS:

WITH
REFLECTIONS
UPON
THE DRAMATIC ART:

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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REFLECTIONS
OF
MADemoiselle CLAIRON

UPON HERSELF,
AND UPON THE DRAMATIC ART.

FIRST REFLECTION.

I HAVE been long inured to sorrow :—
I have observed, that to suffer is the
lot of human-nature in general. The
necessity of devoting my time to study ;
the severity of my labours ; the misery
I have often experienced ; the disap-
pointments I have met with ; the sen-
sibility of my soul ; a violent and con-
stant attachment, rendered unfortunate
by infidelity or absence ;—all these have
even not allowed me to be among the
very few beings whose misfortunes and

calamities have, at least, entitled them to respect. But I observe others more deserving, and more to be pitied, than myself. I must, therefore, arm myself with patience and reason, be moderate, calculate my powers, repress my desires, trust to future circumstances, to my courage, and even to my vanity, to console me for what I have experienced, and enable me even to disregard my sufferings altogether.

SECOND REFLECTION.

As far as it is possible, it is my duty to conceal from every person the knowledge of my infirmities and regrets. To the thoughtless every thing is indifferent; fools make comments, the wicked triumph, and friends afflict themselves.

Alas ! even among the latter we find *ennui* and disgust frequently accompany compassion. I have scarce ever experienced any other consolation from those friends to whom I have complained, save fruitless advice or insulting censure.

I must, therefore, endeavour to acquire sufficient dignity and courage to keep my miseries to myself, and appear in the world with a countenance expressive of that happiness and tranquillity which may make my company pleasing to others.

THIRD REFLECTION.

I must never forget the obscurity of my origin; to murmur would be a crime; to blush would betray ignorance. All that remains in my power is to repair

the deficiency of birth by the mildness of my deportment, the propriety of my conduct, the equality of my disposition, to improve the qualities of my understanding, and the virtues of my soul.

FOURTH REFLECTION.

Possessing no consequence of my own, yet wishing to enjoy society, it becomes me, with the most scrupulous attention, to overcome the haughtiness of my spirit. It is a misfortune which I have derived from nature ; it is ever considered a crime in those who have neither birth or fortune ; and the only manner in which I can retain my disposition, and avoid offence, is by conducting myself without arrogance on the one hand, or baseness on the other.

FIFTH REFLECTION.

As I have myself been the victim of the most unjust and atrocious calumny, I should be inexcusable if, on slight ground, I was to believe what is said of others. What I have suffered ought to regulate my conduct with regard to those who may, in like manner, be traduced. When I have the evidence of my senses, that what is said of such a one is true, I must then examine my heart to see if I cannot discover an excuse for errors that may have been the result of weakness; and, in no case, ought I to pronounce a decided judgment.

SIXTH REFLECTION.

However small my fortune may be, I must learn to be content with it; and, in order to do so, I ought to reflect on

what I originally was, and consider that talents, which only impart fleeting gratifications, are sufficiently rewarded by an easy independence. I ought to return thanks to heaven that I have done nothing base to acquire it. I ought to keep my wants and my desires within bounds, and be beholden to the assistance of no one; and only regret the want of fortune, as it deprives me of the means of relieving the unhappy.

SEVENTH REFLECTION.

Ingratitude is not satisfied with forgetting my services; it has often provided arms for the wicked, with which to wound me. Disheartened by the incredible baseness of those I have served, I have, at times, determined to withhold my commiseration from all. I

was wrong. An honest and sensible mind in vain endeavours to resist the complaints of the unfortunate: the danger of ingratitude is not to be compared with the honour of leaving innocence and virtue under circumstances of distress; and not to do all the good in our power, is to act the part of an ingrate towards human-nature in general. Why should I bear ill offices in remembrance? It is enough for me to know, that any one is unhappy. Perhaps my too great liberality would have totally impoverished me had I never met but with gratitude. It is my opinion, we ought not to go beyond a certain point; for as it is not possible to do all we may desire, we ought not to deprive ourselves of the means of assisting those

who may deserve our assistance. Nature does not bestow on every one the same degree of elevation of soul. There are few who are sufficiently noble-minded to feel the pleasure of being grateful; and those who are not sensible of it are actuated only by envy. The more we heap benefits on such persons, the more we irritate them ; and to place persons in a situation to become wicked, shows an equal want of prudence and humanity.

EIGHTH REFLECTION.

If I cannot turn the conversation from the subject of religion, I ought at least to abstain from mixing in it. It is certain that women speak of religion more from habit than conviction ; and those who most truly profess it are

generally silent. I have read, reflected, and attended to others : reason and evidence compel me to acknowledge, that I have observed almost every one to be influenced by interest, falsehood, and weakness. The most important question always remains in doubt—Am I a free agent, or am I guided by a superior power ? I have heard the affirmative and negative supported by the ablest persons ; but none of their solutions have pointed out to me the secret spring which moves the universe. In interrogating myself, I am sensible that the weakness of my faculties tends to fill my mind with dread—I am unable to satisfy any of my doubts. However attentive I may be to my repose and tranquillity, I constantly find my

strength and reason insufficient. It is impossible to foresee and retard the accomplishment of events. I am ignorant at what time, and under what circumstances, death will surprise me. I am capable of nothing essential with regard to myself; and to abstain from evil is all I can do with regard to others. In this situation of ignorance and misery, does it become me to reason upon, or to reject, that which constitutes my chief support and reliance? I am not so vicious as to brave an hereafter; I yet dare not answer for the virtues I possess. Tender, timid, patient, and withal miserable, it would be the height of horror to conceive that there was no power interested in my existence, and that all are equally subject to annihila-

tion. It becomes me, therefore, so to arrange my thoughts, that I may be constantly impressed with the notion that an all-powerful divinity presides over my destiny. Let those doubt who are inclined ; I shall prefer that belief which is most consolatory to my soul, and supports my courage and virtue, by holding out the prospect of a future reward.

NINTH REFLECTION.

I sometimes experience emotions of pride, which are out of my power to repress ; and I, perhaps, do not check them with that energy of mind which would become me. I wish to bestow favours on all, but to receive them from no one.—Is that greatness of soul ? Is it not, rather, excess of pride ? My

former observations afflicted me—I have myself been the subject of injurious treatment ; yet I ever considered it as forming part of the happiness of my life, that I should sometimes confer obligations. Why should I wish to deny to those whom I have obliged the opportunity of repaying the debt of gratitude ? why should I refuse to them the exercise of that delicacy, pride, and gratitude, which they may possess in the same degree as myself ? My own heart condemns me. To me it would be insupportable not to return the favours I may have received. I should impute ignorance or insolence to such of my equals as would endeavour to deprive me of the means of doing so. My own feelings, with respect to myself,

ought to be the rule of my conduct with regard to others.

Those benefits we confer ought to flow from a desire of being serviceable to the object they are conferred upon, and without any expectation of return. Those benefits we receive should be limited to our means of repaying the obligation. To receive a pure gift is certainly one of the greatest proofs of respect and attachment that can possibly be given, inasmuch as it is yielding to the donor one's opinion, delicacy, and liberty. If the person who confers obligations is deserving esteem—if it is from motives of regard and friendship the obligation is conferred—if you have cause to believe

that by receiving it you give a proof of your attachment, esteem, and respect, you may then accept it without hesitation, and deem yourself happy that you can abandon yourself to the pleasing sentiments of gratitude. But to receive from a protector who confers his benefits only to make a parade of them, of a simple acquaintance, a doubtful friend, a lover upon whose affection you cannot depend, or of one who is soliciting yours, is, in the most shameful manner, to give up to another your opinion, liberty, delicacy, and services.

TENTH REFLECTION.

Have we a right to expect that the men should be as attentive, as tender, as constant as ourselves?—Every reflec-

tion that occurs to my imagination convinces me of the impossibility of it.

The difference of our physical powers, our educations, our prejudices, the manner we employ our time, all concur in convincing me that our pretensions are vain, and that men are not what they ought to be. There are two things which we are reasonably entitled to expect from them: the one is, not to deceive us; the other, not to seduce us. It is shameful to dissemble and sport with the feelings of a weak, helpless being, who has no means of revenging herself. It is abominable to endeavour to corrupt the virtue of a woman already married, or the innocence of a young girl who probably

may be. To introduce trouble and despair into the bosom of families, to transfer inheritances to false heirs on the one hand, or to give birth to those who may be the objects of the law's severity on the other, and to devote those whose souls are most actuated by sensibility to that disgrace and remorse which reflection must produce, appear to me crimes of the highest nature, and deserving the utmost extent of human punishment. If the man who commits them does not afterwards expiate them by a life of affection, attachment, and constancy, he must certainly be the most despicable object in nature.

But let us pardon those who follow

the impulse of voluntary inclinations ;
and let us frankly confess we should
act in the same manner if we dared.

ELEVENTH REFLECTION.

Our years pass over us without our
scarce allowing ourselves to reflect on
what they bring forward. The atten-
tive endearments of those who seek to
please us, the delicacy of our friends,
the blindness of our vanity, prevent us
from perceiving those ravages which
every day produces, and leave us only
the sad remembrance of our errors and
ridiculous follies. It ought to be a
fashion for persons, at every period of
their lives, to act in a manner consist-
ent with, and conformable to, the time
of life they have arrived at. Nature,

beneficent, and foreseeing, has provided for us the pleasures and disappointments peculiar to every age ; and reason ought to teach us not to seek any others. Let us see what consolations mine affords me.

In reflecting upon those dangers and regrets, the passions are the cause of, I think it my duty to felicitate myself that I have not in my veins that effervescence which gives birth to, and nourishes them. Happily for me, I have never experienced any other passion but that of love. Titles, and worldly advantages, have never seduced me. Envy, hatred, or revenge, have never occupied my thoughts, except with reference to my theatrical studies ; and the more I have observed their effects,

the more I have detested them. The tender passion of love is the only one I have to regret : but in renouncing love, I am not obliged to renounce my heart ; friendship and humanity may still occupy it. In extending towards many that tenderness of which it is susceptible, the misfortune of meeting with ingratitude from one will be recompensed by the consolation of being able to reckon upon the gratitude of many others. The loss of a single beloved object leaves us no alternative between a despair which must consume us, or a revenge which must disgrace us. In this respect the advantage is in my favour. The pleasures of the senses are, to souls truly tender, the least source of gratification, and the least capable of

promoting happiness. The sacrifice of them appears to me to be easy, if from reason or necessity we have renounced love. In fact, what do they leave us to regret?—Delirium, the risk of perpetual disappointment, and gross enjoyments. Their consequences are equally dangerous to us; they confirm the attachment of the women, and weaken that of the men; they degrade us and honour them; they render us fearful and submissive, and convert them into ^{poor}coxcombs or tyrants. Assuredly, there is nothing in the exemption from these evils that can excite regret.

∴ But now, when I have retired from the theatre, and my heart is unengaged by the impressions of love, what am I

to substitute in lieu of those occupations which I derived from the one and the other?—My active soul requires something to nourish it. Neither my inclination nor my health allow me to visit, or to receive visits, without intermission ; and the frivolous conversations which we are entertained with in the world are not worth the trouble and inconveniency of partaking in them. I am not rich enough to keep open house ; I am too difficult to accommodate to all indiscriminately. Without title, gallantry, riches, or a passion for intrigue, I cannot expect that my company should be much sought after by others. Every day, some change of situation, absence, age, or death, deprive me of a friend. It is natural

that the world should forget such a being as I am exists, since I am no longer of any use to any one.—In a short time, and I shall be left wholly to myself. Like the Medée of Corneille, I may be allowed to exclaim—“*C’est assez !*”

I have made the most laborious researches, in order to understand the characters of every age and country. Let me now endeavour to know myself; this study is sufficiently important to fill up every moment of my life.

I will state, with all the candour I am capable of, such parts of my life wherein I may appear in the most favourable point of view. I will, by publicly avowing, render it impossible

to recall those wherein I may appear most reprehensible. To destroy my defects, to form my soul to virtue, to render it superior to every human event, to acquire the faculty of appreciating the vanities of the world, and, finally, that I should merit my own pardon and esteem ;—such are the surest means of supporting, and, perhaps, cherishing solitude. The repose of the body, and the peace of the soul; books, reflection, the unremitted endeavour to render all around me happy, will enable me to finish my life without impatience, as to its duration,—and, I dare hope, without regret, as to its loss. At my age, and in my situation, such ought to be the objects nearest my

heart. I will endeavour to accomplish them.

TWELFTH REFLECTION.

To fulfil the duty which reason has imposed upon me, in order to acquire a knowledge of myself, I refer to first principles.

What am I?—How have I conducted myself through life?—What am I still capable of?

FIRST EPOCH.

Providence placed me in the bosom of a poor and helpless Bourgeoise
My misfortunes preceded my birth.

Born at seven months, I received

from nature a weak constitution, equally disadvantageous and opposite to the future developement of my physical and moral situation.

No caresses, no attentions, cherished my infancy;—no idea of art, of talent, or of any science whatever, could I derive from my education. To read was the only thing I knew at the age of eleven years. My catechism and my prayer-book were the only books with which I was acquainted. Stories of ghosts and sorcerers, which I believed to be true histories, were all that my instructors instilled into my mind.

My mother was a violent, ignorant, and superstitious woman, who had no

idea beyond that of keeping me inactive in a corner, or calling me to her in order to make me tremble under her menaces and her blows. My horror at manual labour, to which she wished to accustom me, was the cause of this treatment, and it redoubled my disgust for labour. I could not support the idea of being brought up to a business. I am sure it is to the misfortunes and treatment I met with in my infancy that I am indebted for a mind at once compassionate and determined. I have only maintained my situation, and my physical and moral existence, by the resources which those two qualities have procured me.

At the age of twelve years, fate at

length took pity on me. It obliged my mother to change her lodging. My situation was still the same; but the neighbours, touched with the appearance of langour to which my misfortunes had reduced me, and affected by my beauty, my figure, my voice, and certain marks of judgment, added to a sweetness of temper which I displayed when I was not required to work at the needle, obtained for me the privilege that I should have a little leisure time to devote as I might think proper. This was the first moment of my life I ceased to complain; yet, whether it was the disposition of my mother, or that she wished to get rid of me, she would frequently shut me up in a room that looked towards the street. There was I

obliged to remain without the least means of amusing myself, without the possibility of opening the windows to admire the people passing by. I, however, after the first day, got upon a chair, by which I could, at least, look about the neighbourhood. Mademoiselle Dangeville lodged exactly opposite ; her windows were generally open ; she received lessons in dancing ; she was distinguished for every charm which nature and youth could unite in the same person. My whole soul was assembled in my eyes. I lost not a single motion she made. She was surrounded by her family. As soon as she had finished her lesson, she was applauded, and her mother embraced her. The difference between her situation and my

own penetrated me with the deepest grief. My tears would not allow me to contemplate her any longer. I descended from my chair; and when the agitation of my mind was in some degree calmed, I returned, but all had disappeared.

As far as my weak ideas would enable me, I began to reason with myself. I determined to say nothing of what I had observed, lest I should be deprived of the opportunity in future. I afterwards endeavoured to imitate the same steps and attitudes I had seen mademoiselle Dangeville perform. At last I was released from the room, and asked what I had been doing. For the first time in my life I told a falsehood. I

answered hastily—*I have been doing nothing; I have been asleep.* This detail may appear trifling to many; but it will inform those who have children, how necessary it is to possess their confidence.

This first falsehood emboldened me to commit others. It developed all the malice of which I was susceptible. I derived a pleasure from dissimulation; and these circumstances combined induced me to contract a degree of disdain for my mother, the horror of which my inexperience concealed from me, and which, in a vicious mind, might have been productive of the greatest misfortunes.

I no longer experienced the least re-

pose, except when I was locked up to do penance. Happily the bad humour, or the necessary avocations of my mother, often condemned me to my solitary retreat; I instantly ran to the window; the fine weather favoured me; I could see to the very farther end of her room; I observed and studied her; I remarked her actions as much as it was in my power; and, when she retired, I imitated all I had seen her do. My memory and application so well seconded my efforts, that those who came to the house thought I had been provided with masters. My manner of entering a room, of saluting the company, and of seating myself, was no longer the same. My ideas became enlightened; and the improvement I had ac-

quired, added to the grace of my deportment, obtained me even the favour of my mother.

In the mean time, my secret oppressed me. I had an extreme desire to know who mademoiselle Dangeville was. I ventured to confide in a man who visited us, and who had always treated me less as a child than others had done. He informed me as to the nature of the French stage, and that mademoiselle Dangeville belonged to it. He further promised to take me to the theatre, and obtained my mother's permission to that effect, but not without difficulty. My mother discovered in theatrical representations only the road to eternal damnation; however,

I was suffered to see the performance of *Le Comte d'Essex*, and *Les Follées Amoureuses*. It is not now in my power to describe what my feelings were at that time ; I only know that, during the representation, and the rest of the evening, I could neither eat, drink, or articulate a single word. All my ideas concentrated within myself. I neither saw nor heard any one. “ Go to bed, stupid creature ! ” were the only words that struck me. I immediately left the room ; but, instead of attempting to sleep, I employed myself in remembering and repeating all that I had seen ; and every one was astonished the next day to hear me recite more than an hundred verses of the tragedy, and two-thirds of the after-piece. This prodigious

gious memory was less surprising than the correctness with which I imitated the style of every actor. I lisped like Grandval ; I stammered and copied the air of Crispin ; I imitated Poisson ; I described the archness of manner which distinguished mademoiselle Dangeville ; and the affected stiff style of Balicourt. In short I was looked upon as a prodigy. But my mother frowning at me, said, “ She had rather I knew how to make a gown or a petticoat than to act such fooleries.” This behaviour provoked me ; and finding I was supported by the encomiums I had received, I boldly declared I would never learn any work, and that I was determined to be an actress. Abuse and blows compelled me to be silent ; and to prevent my sinking under

her severity, was all my friends could do in my favour.

From that moment my mother declared that I should be starved to death, and that she would break my arms and legs if I did not work. Those characteristic features, which distinguish one's disposition, are never effaced; and I still remember that I had the pride to restrain my tears, and pronounce, with all the firmness my age would admit of, "*Well, you may kill me if you please; but, for all that, I will be an actress.*"

The most cruel treatment I received, during the two months it continued, could not make me change my resolu-

tion; but my health was injured by the severity of it.

The prejudices of a low education were the only motives by which my mother was guided. Her heart was naturally good; and my situation the more affected her, as I never complained. She went to pour her griefs, on my account, into the bosom of a worthy and sensible woman, for whom she worked. The result of their conversation, the details of which I never learnt, was, that I should experience a sentiment of tenderness of which I had never had the least idea. My mother, on returning home, took me in her arms, bedewed me with her tears, and promised

to consent to my wishes, provided I would love her, forget what was passed, and endeavour to re-establish my health. This unexpected change produced such joy in my soul; that I thought it would have cost me my life; but I soon got the better of it. My mother took me to my benefactress, who introduced me to DEHAIS, one of the performers at the Italian theatre. He thought so favourably of me, that he presented me to all his comrades. I was engaged, and had a part given me to study; and, at length, appeared upon the stage before I had accomplished twelve years of age.

The applauses which I received consoled my mother for the choice I had made. She procured me writing, danc-

ing, and music masters, and also a master to instruct me in the Italian language. My application, my ardour, and my memory, astonished my instructors. I retained, and even seemed to anticipate, the lessons I received; but my extreme youth, my low stature, the apprehensions of the famous Thomasin, that my talents would injure his daughter's, whose success was not yet certain, and who required protection, compelled me, at the end of the year, to seek my fortune elsewhere. I was engaged with the ROUEN company, to perform such characters as were suitable to my age, and to sing and dance. I was to perform in comedy: every thing else was indifferent to me.

RECAPITULATION.

Hitherto I had assuredly nothing with which to reproach myself.—I knew nothing—was capable of nothing.—I blindly followed an impulse of destiny, of which I have been all my life the victim.

Every being's lot is prescribed by fate ; at least all my observations tend to confirm me in that opinion. My experience, my reflections, whatever I have seen in the world, whatever I have read in its history, convince me of the insufficiency of our own actions and exertions. We may, when we are in a situation which allows us an opportunity of comparing, distinguish the path which leads to virtue, from that which con-

ducts us to vice. We are sensible of our errors, our misfortunes, and our injuries. We feel all the advantages of a pure conduct, or a generous action. It appears that we have it in our power to determine our own fortunes: but the impossibility of foreseeing every thing, of knowing every thing, of changing the dispositions we derive from nature, or of commanding the inclinations of those by whom we are surrounded, convince me of our weakness, and teach me to submit with humility to that fate by which we are all directed.

SECOND EPOCH.

Having arrived at Rouen, I had the happiness to please the public, and obtain protectors. Ladies of the most re-

spectable description admitted me to their houses, and loaded me with presents and kindnesses. They continued their favour towards me during the whole time I remained in the city; and one of those ladies* has now, for a period of forty years, honoured me with a continuance of her friendship, esteem, and entire confidence.

My salary, added to that of my mother, who had a place in the theatre, was fully adequate to maintain us. I now laboured incessantly, and without regret, for our mutual advantage; and I thought no person happier than myself.

* Madame la Presidente de Bimorel.

One of my comrades lodged in the same house with us. She knew how to gain over my mother, and engage her to join her in taking a boarding-house. She frequently procured several persons to come to supper with us, and the company became daily more numerous. My mother's late rigid manners were discarded for gaiety and pleasure. She spoke of her former way of life with ridicule. In the mean time I grew tall; and I am not certain whether I was not supposed to have had a kind of partnership in my mother's new profession. A young man, who paid more attention to me than any other, and who, I confess, was no ways disagreeable to me, passed for my lover:

I freely confess I know not what prevented him from being so. Entirely left to my own guidance—without any principles as to the distinction between good and evil, he might have easily made of me just what he pleased; and it was entirely by chance that I left the city, at the end of three years, as pure as I had entered it.

My mother's new associate, having, I suppose, procured a better establishment, quitted us: another, a thousand times more dissolute, supplied her place. Whether it was that they respected my youth; or that they feared to find a rival in me, if they let me into their secret, yet, so it was, I observed nothing, and the natural disposition of my heart

would not allow me to suspect any thing wrong. It was not till a very considerable period had elapsed, that I knew all those circumstances, which I now with pain recall to my remembrance.

A poor pleasant devil*, who wrote verses, and picked up a supper as well as he could, obtained leave of the ladies to come sometimes and amuse them. I was daily the subject of his couplets and stanzas, in which Venus and Vesta were nothing compared to me. But while he was praising my charms and my virtue, he was planning how he might enjoy the one, and destroy the other. Knowing perfectly the nature

* His name was Gaillard.

of the house, he took the opportunity of my mother's absence, and persuaded an old servant we had to let him into my chamber. It was about nine in the morning, and I was still in bed: I was studying—the weather was warm: I had not heard the slightest noise to induce me to be upon my guard. I was just fifteen years of age; and my chemise, and my hair, which flowed in ringlets, were the only covering that concealed me. This sight did not long leave him master of himself: he ran and endeavoured to seize me in his arms. I had the good fortune to escape. My cries brought up the servant, and a woman who lodged in the house. We got brooms and shovels, and drove the wretch into the street. When my mo-

ther returned, she determined to lodge a complaint against him. He was reprimanded by the magistrate, had ballads made upon him and sung through the city, and he was ever banished our house. But rage succeeded his love and desire ; and he wrote that disgusting libel against me, which has been since circulated throughout Europe.

I was at *Havre de Grace* with the company, when it first made its appearance. Far from my protectors, I knew not how to act. Not daring to trust to the advice of the ignorant, the brutal, or the indifferent, I took no step to point out to the public the malignity of the work. My own candour induced me to believe that I might trust

to the justice of mankind. Had I been more experienced, what could I have adopted? A few months' imprisonment, to which the wretch might have been sentenced, would not have prevented the publicity of the book ; my pretended shame would not have been less talked of in the world ; and the reparation made me by the laws would have been overlooked. However, I am now convinced that I acted wrong in not appealing to the laws against him. But is it right, that without regard to the age, the inexperience, or the inability of the oppressed, the tribunals of justice should wait for the complaint of the individual injured, in order to afford reparation? The libellous and calumnious tendency of the book, the per-

usal of which modesty could not avow ; the author, by his audacity in publishing it to the world, with his name prefixed, having drawn upon himself that public indignation which forced him to be concealed from notice ; the complaints which I had previously made of his criminal attempt upon my virtue ; my youth, and my absence from the scene of my supposed vices ;—all these must have appeared to every one sufficient refutations of so unfounded and unjust a charge. Should the want of a vain formality, which my ignorance and inability prevented me from resorting to, have withheld the justice of those who called themselves the interpreters of the laws, the defenders of mankind, and the avengers of inno-

cence. I was unsupported, and could do nothing of myself. This was my crime, and my misfortune.—Alas! of what consequence is it to the majority of mankind, that an individual is wretched? I now am sensible, by experience, that they delight in seeing their fellow-creatures suffer. Their levity will not allow them to investigate; their malignity and self-conceit make them disregard the despair of our sex. However improbable the scandalous reports against us may be, their own perverseness of disposition induces them to believe them; and the impunity of which they are certain increases the audacity and cruelty with which they confirm the slanders against us. Though they may have neither seen or known

any thing of the matter, *it is so said*, or *there's such a report*,—that's quite sufficient for them. What do they gain by this? To embolden the calumniator, and, perhaps, become victims in their turn, if chance places them before the eyes of the public, by calling them to the exercise of any administrative or magisterial functions. The libel which was directed against me is now lost in the immense number of those which have been directed against the whole world. Innocence, majesty, the divinity even, are no longer sheltered from the shafts of malice: the atrocious libels I have read against them ought, assuredly, to console me for what I have read against myself.

But I was far from deriving consola-

tion from my reflections at the moment I received the injury. I returned to Rouen with fear and trembling. I imagined that every door would have been barred against me. I did not dare to lift my eyes to any one; and I appeared upon the theatre with dread; but I found the same public and the same friends. That respectable lady, who had so eminently befriended me, opened my eyes as to the cause of my misfortune. I perceived I was indebted for it to the misconduct of my mother; and the knowledge of this inspired me with so great an aversion for her, that it was with the utmost violence to myself I could submit to remain with her till her last sigh. I have since surmounted the impetuosity of my cha-

racter; and perhaps I am entitled to claim some credit for the silence I preserved on the occasion, and for the happiness she continued to enjoy.

She remained absolute mistress;—the society was only less numerous and better chosen. She had been, for some time, prepossessed in favour of one of my comrades, whom she wished me to marry. My equal appeared beneath me; the *protégé* of my mother was odious to me; and the man appeared, in my eyes, as if he had sat as the model for the character *De Tbibaudois* *. An innate pride, which I could never repress, allowed me only to discover charms in those who appeared to ma-

* A character in *L'Esprit de Contradiction*.

nifest the greatest degree of nobleness of character and dignity of manner; and my intended was most grossly ignorant, and the most insipid creature I ever beheld. I had the address to deny his suit for nearly two years. Our company had quitted Rouen to go to Lisle:—this pitiful lover of mine was always with us; and, far from listening to my reasons and entreaties, he redoubled his solicitations. The orders of my mother—her violence, which she carried so far as to present a pistol to me, in order to obtain my consent, made me sensible of the necessity of having a protector, who, without appealing to the laws, might assume the right of defending me from the misery which threatened me. Actuated by despair alone, with-

out any vile interested motive, without love, without desire, I was on the point of abandoning myself to any one, on the single condition of being protected from marriage, and that death which, with such a husband, would most certainly have awaited me. That moment which, at the first view, conveys an idea of licentiousness, was, perhaps, the most noble, the most interesting, and the most striking in my whole life. Though I was then near seventeen years of age, and had not derived any considerable knowledge of the world, either from reading or from those with whom I had associated, yet the calmness of my disposition protected me from the solicitations of my admirers, and from that curiosity which

generally characterises young girls: and if it is only recollected that I was born with a weak constitution, that I was oppressed in my infancy; if it is considered also, that severe and continual labour necessarily absorbed all the faculties of my mind; however I may be denied the merit of having acted wisely, it will, at least, be conceded to me, that my conduct was matter of astonishment for one situated as I was. Be that as it may, the moment I am referring to is one which I recall to my mind with the greatest pleasure, and which I take most delight in making the subject of conversation among my friends. I wish it was in my power to describe my feelings on the occasion. I am sure that the most austere of my

own sex would compassionate the conflict of my soul, and would not blush at the picture:—the impossibility of depicting it well, and the fear of weakening it, are the only reasons which restrain me.

My marriage was broken off—my mother ceased to persecute me, and I applied myself with more ardour than ever to whatever might improve my talents. LANOUÉ disbanded his company, in order to make his appearance at the French theatre. I engaged myself in another company that was to perform at Gand, then the head-quarters of the king of England. I was neither flattered by the encomiums I received, nor tempted by the immense

fortune which lord Ma... offered me. The contempt which the English nation affects for mine rendered every individual belonging to it insupportable to me. It was impossible for me to listen to them without expressing my dislike. The company could not support itself without me; they perceived my disgust, and endeavoured to prevent the possibility of my leaving them; but, notwithstanding the difficulty of obtaining passports, I found means to escape and repair to Dunkirk. The commandant of that city soon received an order from the king that I was to sing at the opera at Paris. I had a prodigious extent of voice, but was rather an indifferent musician; however, though I was mademoiselle Le-

maurè's double, I had the happiness to succeed. I found so little talent was required at this *spectacle*, in order to appear possessed of the highest abilities; it seemed to me so simple, merely to follow the modulations of the musician; the manners of the performers were so disagreeable to me, and the smallness of the salary was so absolutely degrading, that at the end of four months I signified my intention of leaving them.

A new order from the king dispensed with my remaining there six months, as custom prescribed, on condition that I should engage myself at the French theatre as mademoiselle Dangeville's double. At the time when I was first

ordered to Paris, the principal characters I performed were *soubrettes* or abigails: I had played three or four second-rate characters in Lanoue's company; and SARAZZIN, who saw me perform, said "I should one day be the chief support of the stage." The desire of a more lucrative engagement, and the vanity of undertaking every thing, induced me to stipulate that I should act the principal tragic characters. When I arrived at Paris, I knew but five, and had played none of them above once or twice. I was far from dreaming of that celebrity, in characters of this kind, to which the voice of the public afterwards deigned to elevate me.

When I presented myself at the theatre, I was informed, "that although the order of the king expressed the particular line in which I was to be employed, yet that the French theatre required an union of every talent, and that at least, it would be expected of me that I should make myself useful in singing and dancing in the light pieces."

The actors of the present day seem to think that, however little they do, and however little they are capable of, the public ought to be satisfied with them; and, in short, they conduct themselves as if the theatre was merely for their emolument, and not the public's gratification. In my time we were persuaded that the actors were made

for the theatre, and not the theatre for the actors. We disputed who should show the greatest zeal, and make the greatest efforts ; and though those possessed of the very first-rate abilities had not a fourth of the salary which is now lavished upon the very lowest actor on the stage, yet, if I may be believed, the public was far better served. I consented to whatever was required of me ; but I thought, as I was to perform tragedy, I had better begin with it.— Why so ? I knew nothing of it. The cold and disdainful air with which my proposal was received, piqued me ; I insisted in such a manner as convinced them I would take no refusal. They proposed CONSTANCE in *Ines*, ARICIA.

in *Phédre*. I answered “that they were too trifling characters ;—that I knew *Phédre*, and that I would play it.” It was one of the most celebrated characters of mademoiselle Dumesnil.—I was unacquainted with that circumstance—I had never been at the French theatre since I had seen the *Comte d’Essex*. My proposal made every one smile ;—they assured me the public would never suffer me to finish the first act. I could scarce contain my passion at this declaration, but my pride restrained me. I answered, and with all the dignity I was able—“ *Gentlemen, you will either allow me to play it, or you will not :—I have a right to make my choice :—I will either per-*

“*form Phédre, or not perform at all.*”

They consented, and I made my *début* in that character.

I will not speak of the flattering encouragement which was given to my first essays, nor the uninterrupted favour of the public which supported me through my labours during a period of twenty-two years. What I should be induced to say from a motive of gratitude, would, perhaps, be imputed to me as vanity.

I am allowed only to give an account of those arduous researches which I have made ; they will be found detailed in the reflections I have made upon the dramatic art. It now only remains to

justify my retreat. I am about to give an account of those iniquitous proceedings, which made it my duty to retire from the theatre.

Naturally and unfortunately violent and proud, I have ever manifested my impatience at that system of cabal, intrigue, and injustice, which envy and jealousy have incessantly excited against me. No one is ignorant that in every society or association, whatever may be its nature, those alone who possess mere common-rate talents are suffered to remain in peace. Merit, personal or acquired, can never find favour. This truth has often consoled me for the many attempts which have been directed against me; but I have frequently

been unable to avoid giving vent to my complaints: however, I dare affirm that no improper word, no embarrassing reproach, no remonstrance to my superiors, no rancour of disposition, have ever been able to alienate my affections from any one of my comrades; there was not one of them whom I had not more or less obliged, and there was not one who did not more or less prove ungrateful. The more celebrity I acquired, the greater efforts I made to extend our emoluments; the more advantages I obtained, either to the theatre, or to the individuals belonging to it, in the same proportion did they endeavour to injure me, and wound my feelings. I shall cite two examples,

which will serve as a specimen of the rest.

We were at one time in distress for money, and unable to wait till our salaries became due. The performers went every week to the house of M. de Boulogne, then comptroller-general, to solicit the payment of the king's pension; but they could obtain nothing. At the expiration of a certain period, they nominated me as one of a new deputation; and I was at the audience of M. de Boulogne, with seven of my comrades, among whom were two other women. The minister perceived me through the crowd that surrounded me, and came and asked me, What brought

me to him?—My answer was, “The despair, my lord, to which our wants, and your refusal, have reduced us.”—“I should be extremely sorry,” said he, “you had reason to complain of me. Go up stairs to AMELIN’s office, tell him to get every thing ready for me to sign, and you shall be paid to-morrow.” My comrades heard the whole that passed. I thought they would have been as well satisfied as myself, and I was proceeding to the office; but when I was about half way, and perceived that no one followed me, I returned to know the reason. PRÉVILLE, swelling with anger, and foaming with rage, had stopt them in the anti-chamber, to persuade them that the minister had equally insulted all of them, by his refusal to the

performers in general, and by the favour he had seemed to grant at the particular instance of mademoiselle Clairon; that he would not, on any account, degrade himself by following me to the office, or even by receiving his money. I did not wait, but returned to the office. ARMAND alone followed me; we had our money next day, and Préville was not the last to receive his share. From this one instance let us proceed to the other.

The excommunication of those who belong to the theatres is so scandalous, and, I may add, so brutal; it is so injurious to talents, it is so incontestible a proof of the inconsistency of the nation, that to be a human being, and a French

subject, are all that are necessary to make any one sensible of its injustice. It is not in this place that I shall discuss the subject; I will not speak of my abhorrence of such a system, nor of the reasons with which I have furnished my mind against it; the fact alone is sufficient for the present.

M. de Mothe, of the order of advocates, and whom I had never before seen, had requested me to do him a service. Among other things, we conversed respecting the excommunication of the theatres. I easily perceived that he had not the talents necessary to procure us relief; but he spoke like a man tolerably well informed; and I showed him a short essay upon the subject, as a

specimen of what I meant some day to publish. He offered me his services—I accepted them; but instead of advising with me, and consulting as to the form, the tenor, and extent of the work which I wished for, pressed, I believe, by the want of money, he printed his insignificant memoir, and I then read it for the first time. When it was published, my comrades thought it very unjust that I should wish to attribute to myself the glory of rescuing them from their degraded state. I told them I had no other object than that of associating them with me. It was in vain I represented to them the honour and profit they might have derived from such a proceeding on my part. Madame Drouin, the accuracy of whose judgment,

and the excellence of whose disposition, influenced every action of her life, was the only person who offered to second me ; and, among the rest of our company, I experienced only obstinacy, ignorance, and jealousy.

There was a M. Co de Chau, who was likewise an advocate and a particular friend of Prévile, and who also frequently dined and supped with most of the performers. He was one of the members of their council, (for though they are excommunicated they have a council as well as the greatest potentates). This Co de Chau, who was base enough to become the censor of Fre, and mean enough to go with a few of the performers and

play, at such houses as would invite them, those obscene pieces which can only be represented in secret, was also villain enough to aggravate the degradation of those of whose council he was a member, and barbarous enough to deprive his brethren of their means of living. He denounced one of their pieces and its author. The first was publicly burnt, and the name of the second was struck out of the list of authors. I was in possession of every possible proof of his shameful proceeding: I informed my comrades of it, not doubting but they would feel the injury, and, with the consent of the rest of the council, would request the sieur Co to retire. They not only continued him, but treated him with more atten-

tion than ever. From these two circumstances, it may easily be perceived that I could neither have any very great inclination towards my comrades, nor my comrades towards me.

This conduct rendered my profession so extremely unpleasant, I was so disgusted with the manners of our company, so indignant at seeing those who superintended the theatre grant situations in it, and bestow the principal characters as the reward of their pleasures,—I found myself so truly uncomfortable, and I so increased my ill state of health by chagrin, that, without any regard to the very moderate state of my fortune, I resolved to retire. The representations of my friends, and the be-

nefits of M. le Duc de Choi and of M. de la Bo, imposed upon me as a duty that I should remain*. I sacrificed my disgust to their wishes.

But the conduct of Préville at length produced that event which had been so ardently desired both by him and myself.

The unfortunate, or rather the ridiculous affair of Dubois, commenced by M. le Duc de Du, who was too rash and inconsiderate to foresee the consequences of it, and afterwards revived and proceeded in by the des-

* These two gentlemen sent 40,000 livres to Trutat, the notary, with orders to inquire of me how I would have them laid out.

potic levity of M. le Maréchal de R.,
 produced that famous catastrophe which
 has been so long known by the appella-
 tion of “ *The Day of the Siege of Ca-*
lais,” and which gave Prévaille hopes
 of seeing his plans realised.—Previous
 to that time, he had gained the confi-
 dence of the lieutenant of police, who
 made no secret of his desire to com-
 mand us ; the intendant of accounts,
 who wished to have the direction of
 our finances ; and a counsellor of par-
 liament, who thought his consequence
 injured by the authority of those who
 superintended the theatre. These four
 persons united to take advantage of
 such circumstances as might present
 themselves. As I was an object of
 terror to all promoters of dishonest

plans, it was decided, that although I had avowedly and, at the same time, singly opposed myself to the disaster that had taken place ; though I had appeared at the theatre to submit to the *soi-disant* order of the king ; though a letter from Le Kain and Molè, announcing their refusal and departure, had been delivered into Prévillè's hands in my presence ; though Brissard and Duberval had refused to obey,—it was determined, I say, that they should throw the whole blame on my intrigues and seductive arts. Mademoiselle Dubois, on the other hand, forgetting that it was to me she was indebted for what little talent she possessed, and that I might have played any of the characters of which she might have

made choice,—forgetting also she had been informed by me of all the plots against her father, who, to say the truth, was a perfect brute, and no less a rogue,—marvellously well seconded the intentions of the junto ;—young, handsome, possessing the power of rendering the gentlemen who had the superintendance of the theatre as happy as they could wish to be, protected also by a Duc de Vil . . . and a Marquis de Fit, she proceeded with dishevelled hair to demand vengeance, for my atrocities and the misfortunes of her respectable father. Her lamentations, the practical assistance she received from her adherent, who assaulted all who opposed her, and the decision of an officer of the regiment of Fitz-

James, who said, with a loud voice at the bar of justice, “that it was *at least* necessary to apprehend me,” convinced the public how much I was wronged. Nevertheless, mademoiselle Dubois, escorted by her supporters, carried her complaints to the feet of the Maréchal de Rie—My talents, my twenty years services, my irreproachable conduct, my friendship for the complainant, what could they all avail, when placed in competition with a handsome girl? She demanded that I should be sent to prison; and obtained her request with the greater facility, inasmuch as to make a fellow-creature miserable is the chief delight of a potent lord.—The silence of his king, and of the laws, which he can mould to his own

purpose, allow him to undertake whatever he pleases; and the more celebrated his victim may be, the more is his power displayed. The order was given to arrest me—they came to drag me from my bed, where I was confined by an inflammation in my stomach. Madame de Sauvigni, wife of the intendant of Paris, was at that time with me;—all that she could obtain was, that she should herself conduct me to Fort l'Evêque. They suffered me to remain there for five days; afterwards they ordered me to confine myself to my own house; forbidding me, at the same time, from being visited by more than six persons, whom they named. These orders were continued during twenty-one days, without any proof having

been alleged against me, without my ever having been heard, and without any antecedent steps having given me the slightest intimation of what was going forward.

While I was in prison, I received the most flattering marks of attention and respect that could be paid me ; but I, at the same time, received insults which it is impossible I can ever pardon, inasmuch as it could only have been in consequence of express orders, and the certainty of impunity, that any one could have had the audacity to have insulted me in such a situation.

I made not the least concession—no intreaty disgraced me, no complaint,

no emotion of impatience escaped me. Even my friends could not penetrate what passed in my soul—I waited till order was restored in the theatre, and then I announced my intention of quitting it. My time was finished—the jealousy of my comrades, the contemptible and barbarous conduct of my superiors, the facility with which the wicked can convert the public, generally so respectable, into a wild and inconsiderate savage, the reprobation of the church, the inconsistency of being a French subject, without enjoying the rights of a citizen, and the silence of the laws relative to the slavery and oppression of theatrical performers, had made me but too sensible of the weight, the danger, and the ignominy of my chains,

to consent to wear them any longer—I owed it to myself to revenge the insult I had received. My retreat appeared to me the only step I could take to accomplish it;—it was the more satisfactory to my mind, that, as I was only forty-two years of age, I might naturally expect my loss would, in some measure, be felt and regretted.

The moment the decree for restraining my person was taken off, I went to return thanks to M. le Duc d'Aumont, who alone had conducted himself like a man of honour throughout this ridiculous farce. He was ignorant what it was all about;—I informed him, and he approved of my conduct. The measures he took defeated the hopes of the

council of four; and, as I must acknowledge, I found some pleasure in vexing these petit tyrants, whenever I had an opportunity. I yielded to the entreaties of M. le Duc d'Aumont, not to signify my intention of retreating till after the expiration of a year.

RECAPITULATION.

During the course of the twenty-eight years I have just passed in review, I have only pursued the order of my dramatic career. I have suppressed many interesting facts, fearful of appearing too minute, and of destroying the connection of my narrative:—they will find a place elsewhere.

I have omitted whatever only re-

garded my heart, which I am not bound to give an account of to any one, seeing my whole family is composed of myself alone : but, without entering into the detail of my errors, my misfortunes, or my pleasures, which have resulted from my education, the sensibility of my soul, my own free will, or the example of others, and which I am but too conscious of, I will not dissemble any of my faults, and I confess I have many. Envy, calumny, and impunity, have so far exaggerated the detail of them, that it appears to me almost impossible for any reasonable being to give credit to them. My occupation, my studies, my ill health, my disinterestedness, and, I may say, my own defence, that spirit of pride

which has never deserted me on any great occasion of my life, are certain assurances that I have never been capable of premeditated guilt. My talents, my person, the facility of access to me, have lain such a variety of men at my feet, that it was impossible for a soul naturally tender, and incessantly impressed with scenes most likely to seduce the passions, to be wholly impregnable to the attacks of love. If it is necessary closely to guard the best educated females—if to repress their inclinations it is necessary to confine them to the cloister, surely I may be justified. Love is a debt due to nature;—I have satisfied it, but in a manner that leaves me no cause to blush; I defy any one to cite an instance

wherein I have acted disgracefully—
an instance wherein I have suffered any
man to bestow pecuniary favours upon
me in return for my love. I defy any
one to mention a wife, or a parent,
whose happiness I have disturbed:—
there is not a woman of my acquaint-
ance who can reproach me with having
listened for a moment to her lover:
there is not a being who can accuse
me of having deceived her. I have
indulged in no excesses—neglected none
of my duties—admitted of no disorder
in my domestic concerns. In order
to please me, it was necessary to ap-
pear as virtuous as amiable. No child,
the victim of harsh laws and customs,
can make me blush for having given
it existence. It depended only on my-

self, on many occasions, to become legitimately a lady of consequence. I have resisted, for fifteen years together, the solicitations, the intreaties, and the tears of one of the most seducing men nature ever formed, and one who was dear to my soul, in order that I might obey the voice of honour and of duty.

On whatever side I raise my eyes, I confess I see but very few women who can carry a more upright countenance than myself; but I do not, therefore, assume the right of altogether excusing myself. My most mortal enemy, the most severe casuist, cannot condemn me with less severity than I condemn myself. I have no cause to

blush—I experience no remorse ; yet I shudder at the errors I have committed ; when I contemplate the whole of my past life, I find sufficient to regret. Whether it is that my organs, enfeebled by age and infirmities, render me pusillanimous, or that the present calm of my passions deceives me as to the possibility of always governing them ; whether it is that my vanity misleads me, by whispering to me that I have a sufficient share of virtues to pretend to the possession of all : however this may be, I shall never pardon myself for my weaknesses, nor allow myself to seek excuses in the decrees of fate,

In tracing this history I have no

other design than that of acquiring a knowledge of myself, of correcting my own errors, and, by observing my own defects, learn indulgence and compassion towards those of others. If this history should survive me, may it be an useful lesson, and preserve every sensible and virtuous soul from the snares and charms of error.

THIRD EPOCH.

When M. le Duc d'Aumont had calmed me by an assurance that I should have the order for retiring from the stage as soon as I thought proper to demand it, he endeavoured, by offers of the most advantageous nature, to prevent my ever requiring it. He offered that I should be paid by

the king alone—that I should no longer have any dependence upon superiors—that I should have no further occasion to associate with the actors or actresses.—that I should perform merely when I thought proper so to do, and without any further trouble than that of writing a note expressive of my intention to this effect—“ *I desire such a piece for such a day.*” I only perceived, in all these offers, the danger of creating enemies; and, indeed, I should have deserved them, by divesting myself of all those restraints which belonged to my state and condition in life, and by satisfying my vanity at the expence of my judgment. He then offered to relieve the theatre from the disgrace of general excommunication;—he knew

I had had this project long in my mind, that I had considered it with every possible degree of attention, that I had been assisted by persons of the greatest talents and merit, that I reckoned upon powerful protectors, and that my memoirs on this subject were nearly ready.

I will not dissemble that I was actuated by a considerable share of vanity, in addition to the just and natural desire of filling a more respectable situation. My peculiar talent could neither be described by writing or painting; the idea of it vanished with my contemporaries. I therefore imagined I should rise superior even to what I had hitherto been, if I obtained the glory of surmounting the prejudices of my na-

tion :—the attempt alone was praiseworthy—I accepted his offer. We agreed, that at my return from Geneva, where I was going to consult the famous TRONCHIN, we should take the necessary steps with regard to the king, and that I should return to the theatre if we succeeded.

Previous to my departure, I waited upon all my superiors, and had every reason to be satisfied with the concern and regret they expressed ; but it was in vain I hoped to conciliate my oppressors—the sight of their victim irritated them : those who have injured others naturally hate them for the injuries they have done them. I learnt, during my absence, that the result of

mademoiselle Dubois' pleasures were visible and pressing, and that they incapacitated her from performing at Fontainebleau.

I wrote to M. le Duc d'Aumont, that, if this news was true, I was perfectly ready to attend the court wherever it might be held—that I should be happy only to revenge myself on M. de Richlieu, by extricating him from the difficulty he might be in, and by showing my respect and gratitude to the king for the very flattering manner in which he had spoken of my person and my talents.

M. le Duc d'Aumont, delighted with an offer which facilitated every possible

arrangement, immediately went to M. le Maréchal de Richlieu, and was not a little surprised to hear him say,—“ *No, that would give offence to mademoiselle Dubois: we will manage as well as we can.*” In giving me an account of this surprising conduct, M. d’Aumont added this observation to his letter, which I still have, “ *Think only at present of restoring your health: they are unworthy the sacrifice you wish to make of it.*”—When I returned from Geneva, every thing was prepared to carry the plan, previously concerted, into execution. The memoir was put into the hands of M. le Comte de Saint Florentin, who promised to read it to the council. My protectors gave me every reason to rely upon them. M. the Archbishop con-

sented not to oppose it ; the king, who heard I had a favour to solicit, promised to grant it, if possible. He was to have been informed by M. le Duc de Du . . . , who had undertaken to read my memoir to him.

The unfortunate duke, who always wished to do what was right, and ever did what was wrong, with doubt and trembling stammered out a few words relative to my business. The king listened to him with kindness, and demanded what it was I wished for. This was a favourable moment to have presented the memoir ; but the dread of displeasing M. de Saint Florentin suddenly annihilated the zeal of my duke : he contented himself with answering,

“that the fear of remaining excommunicated prevented me from returning to the theatre; and that I was resolved not to return, even though the king should command me.”—“That’s ridiculous enough,” said the king; “let me hear what she proposes, I will do all I can to serve her.” The ideas, when once deranged, are with difficulty recalled; so it was with M. le Duc de Du . . .; he had not a word to say. The circumstances I have just mentioned I had from himself. Whatever opinion may be formed as to his abilities, it is impossible not to render due homage to his good intentions.

At length the day arrived which was to determine the success of my endeavours. Perceiving that the council was

about to break up, and the books to be closed, the king deigned to say, "Let me know what it is that mademoiselle Claron desires."—"To avail herself of the power of your majesty, and of the parliament," replied M. le Duc de Pras...—"She is too sensible a woman for that," said the king: "let me know what she wishes." Then M. de Saint Florentin wrote upon a small bit of paper,—"*that I demanded of his majesty the reprinting of the declaration of Louis XIII. which had been confirmed by himself.*" His majesty knew nothing more of this declaration than he knew of my memorial. He thought he was granting all I desired by ordering it to be reprinted. As to myself, perceiving the danger and in-

utility of persevering, I demanded my liberty to retire.

The reason of this manœuvre was as follows:—

The minister, who had so ill interpreted my intentions, had, for some time, been a professed adorer of one of my comrades who had retired from the stage. She could not bear me, because I had refused to marry one of her brothers; at least I am not aware of any other cause for her dislike. She conceived it to be the last degree of insolence, on my part, to assume more consequence than herself. Her lover adopted her opinion. He influenced the Duc de Cho... so far as to engage

him to oppose me; and, notwithstanding all his promises, he confessed it was not in his power to deny his friend and relation. I must acknowledge it would have been extremely gratifying to me to have obtained what I so much desired; but it was an object still nearer my heart to withdraw myself for ever from a situation in which I was the object of jealousy, envy, intrigue, and tyranny. I have never ceased to bless my lot since I quitted it.

The sweets of tranquillity and repose, which I had never before tasted; the delights of society; a fortune adequate to every real want; and a judgment improved by study and experience, enabled me to correct my desires, and

amply compensated for the pleasures I
 had abandoned. The attention I de-
 voted to natural history agreeably filled
 up my time in lieu of my former la-
 bours. I had nothing to regret—I de-
 sired nothing. But the happiness I ex-
 perience*d* was not of long duration.
 —The Count de Val... inherited a
 considerable estate; but his good for-
 tune changed his disposition; his ab-
 sence was frequent and long; he was
 the soul of our society; and, when he
 was not with us, the time appeared te-
 tious. He assured me I might ever
 rely upon him. I had done all in my
power to make him my friend; but he
turned out ungrateful. I lost his friend-
 ship altogether. At this time the base

conduct of M. l'Abbé Tenai deprived me of one-third of my property. The dread of contracting debts induced me to retrench my expences; and, consequently, it was not long before I was deserted by the rest of my society. At Paris it is absolutely necessary either to intrigue, or to keep open house if you do not wish to be wholly left to yourself.

The affliction of my soul, and the dreadful solitude I was reduced to, inspired me with the idea of retiring to a convent, or, at least, to my native province. I determined to dispose of my jewels, and several other valuable effects;—with their produce, and a few years' economy, I should have been as

rich as ever; but I could not carry this plan into execution. The count de Val . . . , with an income of 120,000 livres, was deeply in debt, and unable to support his expences; he had no means of borrowing, and was altogether in such a situation that I felt alarmed for his reputation. The greater reason I had to complain of his conduct towards me, the more I thought it my duty to extricate him. I sold all I possessed, and lent him the whole produce for ten years, at five per cent. interest.

I was, at this time, extremely indisposed. The person I had employed to value my effects was a knave, and I only received 90,000 francs for what

had been estimated at 50,000 crowns. Having no longer a bed to lie upon, and not being entitled to receive my interest till the expiration of a year, - I determined to go abroad. Chance had brought me acquainted with the Margrave of Anspach. The knowledge I had acquired of this prince's candour, his noble and affecting simplicity, the tender and friendly concern he had expressed from the first knowledge he had of me, added to his letters, which assured me of the continuance of his kindness, induced me to consent to leave my country. Paris only brought to my mind the mournful recollection of the past. I could no longer be of service to any one. The kindness of my sovereign still left me the hope of being

useful to my fellow creatures. Compelled to shut my heart against the only being who had formerly occupied it;—too much enlightened by reason and experience to abandon myself to a new passion; yet feeling the necessity of loving, I extended my sensibility throughout all nature. The means I still retained of being of service to at least a few individuals, induced me to believe I had still sufficient sources of happiness left.—I departed.

The climate of Germany was too severe for a person of my age and infirmities. The charms of society are there unknown; the learned spoke only their own language; and the characteristic beauties of my own were not under-

stood; the arts were reduced to the lowest ebb; and the pride of birth, and the extreme ignorance of the people, with regard to every branch of science, were circumstances far from being calculated to render me estimable in their eyes. The attention paid to me at first I attributed only to their desire to please their master. I have not only to state that I was not afterwards treated with that common degree of respect which was due to me, but I have also to undeceive the world as to the views and objects with which I had been invited, and the snares which a monster had prepared for me. There is no court so insignificant as not to have its Narcissus—I had to defend my honour, and even my life, from the various

stratagems which this wretch practised against me. My frame sunk under such accumulated miseries; I had a dreadful fit of sickness; and from that time I have only reckoned my days by my miseries and my afflictions.

However painful my life was, its prolongation furnished me with the means of destroying calumny, of doing good, and of acquiring friends;—this happiness consoled me for living.

I will not enumerate the many acts of kindness I performed in this country: suffice it that my heart is sensible that the inhabitants will not forget me.

I will not allow myself the liberty ei-

ther of praising or condemning the Mar-
 grave. Without being insensible to his
 defects, I thought for near seventeen
 years that he was one of the most vir-
 tuous beings in nature. My respect
 for his dignity, my gratitude for the
 confidence with which he had so long
 honoured me, forbids me now passing
 judgment upon him. I am content to
 appeal to those respectable characters
 who live under his laws, to bear testi-
 mony to my own disinterestedness, and
 the purity of my conduct.

.....

I have done all the good it was in
 my power to do ; I have protected and
 supported my greatest enemies ; I can-
 not reproach myself with having in-
 trigued, complained, or revenged my-
 self against any one, or with having

suffered myself to be biassed, even by private friendship: I have never introduced either mistresses or favourites: for the space of seventeen years I have constantly sacrificed my will, my repose, my interest, the delights of my native country, and my health. The happiness and the glory of the Margrave were the only objects of my labours and of my ambition; yet the only recompence I have received for so pure an attachment is, the destruction of my fortune and means of existence, added to outrage and ingratitude.....

But I will be silent—I pity, I pardon, and still breathe the most ardent wishes for his happiness.

I do not think the remainder of my life can form an interesting event. All

is said—all is finished with regard to me. Exhausted by thirty years' labour, by afflictions of every kind, by the many years which have rolled over my head, by continual woes and mortal maladies, which have almost yearly attacked me, it appears impossible that anything should induce me to quit that simple and tranquil state of life which I have resolved to lead.

I have only reserved about five or six families, whom I occasionally visit. I have very few friends or acquaintances left; and I enjoy, with satisfaction, those moments they are so kind as to sacrifice to me. I have a commodious and agreeable dwelling, perhaps somewhat too magnificent for my situation

and fortune ; but it is all that remains to remind me of my theatrical dignities. I have been used to thrones and palaces for more than thirty years ; yet their luxury and pleasures have not made me forgetful of myself ; and I am persuaded every enjoyment is reasonable, when it is at our own expence, and is injurious to no one.

The decay of my body has not yet influenced either my faculties or feelings ; I possess all the sensibility, all the activity of my early youth. My taste for reading is happily increased—It daily introduces me to the company of all the distinguished personages of every age and place—I learn with them to compare, to reflect upon, and to support

the cares and afflictions of life—to prove that all things dissolve and vanish, and that I ought to wait, without impatience or regret, till it becomes my turn to disappear from this earth.

It would have been a high gratification to me, to have been enabled to have sought at the *spectacles* those dissipations which even my retirement has not prevented my wishing to partake in. Though I still retain a perfect remembrance of our great poets, and often read their works, yet to see them represented would impart a more lively pleasure to my mind, and give greater delight to my imagination. The beauty of action naturally adds to the enchantment of the scene; but, alas!

what do I meet with at these representations, but the vulgarity of low life, or the ravings of bedlam? No principles of art, no idea of dignity of character: every one plays his part according to his own fashion, without any regard to the consistency of the scene, or the general effect of the piece, and forgets that the performer should accommodate himself to those with whom he plays—No unity of tone, no dignity of deportment.—I have seen heroes throw themselves flat on their bellies, and sometimes walk on their knees. I have seen indecency carried so far by the performers, that an actress has appeared under a simple covering of flesh-coloured taffety, fitted to the symmetry of the body from head to foot. I have

seen, under the names of the most distinguished characters of antiquity, low-bred girls placing themselves in the most disgusting attitudes, stamping with their feet, and continually striking their arms against their sides, leaning on the men, and acting with the most revolting familiarity. I have been deafened with noise and ranting; and to finish the matter, the pit have cried out *Bravo!*

It is not my duty to determine whether the public or the actors of the present day are deceived, or whether the public or the actors of my time were deceived; but I may be allowed to observe, that there is no vestige of resemblance between the one and the

other. Perhaps it is right to despise all tradition in respect to the stage, and to perform Merope in a careless manner, Hermione as if she was a coquet, and Monime as if she was wholly divested of shame and modesty. If such is the case, my studies have misled me. I bow with respect to the superior judgment of the present day; but whether it is owing to the remains of my vanity, whether it is—in short, whatever may be the cause, there is nothing that so displeases and disgusts me as the incredible alteration which has taken place in the French theatre.

PARTICULAR FACTS.

ORDER OF DEBUT.

NOT wishing to interrupt the order of my narration, I have passed over several anecdotes, which, however, I deem sufficiently interesting to be related.—This is one of them.

Though it was by the king's express order that I quitted the opera to perform at the French theatre, I was told that I ought to present myself to M. le Duc de Gêvres, governor of Paris, and gentleman of the chamber, to receive the order in writing.

Mademoiselle Dumesnil undertook to

conduct me to him. I was then twenty years old, and possessed of a figure which most people thought handsome. I was allowed to have taste and a tolerable share of judgment—my deportment was dignified ; and I may, without vanity, assert that my *ensemble* was interesting.

The Duc de Gêvres was a tall man—his pale countenance, his shrivelled figure, his squeaking voice, his nose daubed with Spanish snuff, and the napkin which he held, though they excited my attention, did not hinder me from discovering in him an air of distinction.—The emotion of fear with which he perceived he had inspired me prepossessed him in my favour.

Mademoiselle Dumesnil was obliged to be my interpretest. My pretensions explained, the Duke advanced a few paces and said—“ *She is handsome.—They*
“ tell me you possess talents—I read so
“ in your looks—You will, no doubt,
“ succeed.” Struck with astonishment, I raised my eyes with all the indignation with which I was penetrated, and had confidence enough to say to the Duke, while I surveyed him from head to foot—“ *I have read your Grace also ;*
“ but, my Lord, it is necessary to be
“ more particularly acquainted before
“ we can appreciate each others ta-
“ lents.”

Though there were more than fifty persons in the room, you might have

heard the motion of a fly's wings. They all cast down their eyes ; but M. le Duc de Gêvres, after a moment's reflection, came forward, took me by the hand, and said, in the most affectionate and friendly manner,—“ Mademoiselle, in whatever relates to myself, you may depend upon me : you may rest persuaded of my eagerness to serve you.” I was silent, I made my most respectful obedience to him, and retired.—From that day he has never suffered a week to pass without paying his court to me ; and I can with truth say, I never had a protector more serviceable to me, and at the same time actuated by more disinterested motives.

A NECDOTE,
RELATING TO
THE CHARACTER OF RODOGUNE.

The far greater part of the public have no opinion at all of their own; they suffer themselves to be hurried away by caprice, by the chiefs of the pack whom they call learned critics, because they are as vociferous as insolent. The multitude are always sure of of being pleased by sudden exclamations, violent gestures, unnatural transitions, and low familiarity. I confess the approbation of this class of judges is of little importance.—It was my custom to hear the criticisms of others; I then reasoned within myself as to the propriety of them, without suffering my judgment to be biassed by my

vanity. I entreated every well-informed person I could meet with to tell me my defects, and to spare none of my faults. When I played, I endeavoured to fix my eye upon some one in the pit, whom I knew to be a good judge, and I played to please him: if I could not find such a person, I played to please myself. I did not calculate upon whether I had received more or less applause, but whether I was sensible of having displayed more or less merit. In admiring the talents of my companions on the stage, I was emulated to excel them: many of their faults were applauded, which I should have been ashamed to have imitated. For example:

Mademoiselle Gaussin was perfectly

handsome ; her voice was as expressive as possible ; her *ensemble* was noble ; her every motion was characterised by an infantine grace, which it was impossible to resist ; but she was Mademoiselle Gaussin in every thing. Zare and Rodogune were cast in the same mould. Age, state, situation, time, and place, had all the same tint.

Zare is the pensive inmate of a convent : but Rodogune, demanding of her lovers the head of their mother, is assuredly a vehement and imperious character. It is true that Corneille has introduced four verses rather of a pastoral than a tragic nature :

Il est des nœuds secrets, il est des sympathies,
Dont, par le doux rapport, les ames assorties,

S'attachent l'une à l'autre, et se laissent piquer
 Par ce je ne sais quoi qu'on ne peut expliquer.

Rodogune is in love ; and the actress who does not remember that the expression of such a passion ought to be modified according to the character, and not according to the words, would speak these verses with a grace and amorous simplicity, in my mind, more adapted to the character of Lucinde, in *L'Oracle*, than to that of Rodogune. The public, accustomed to such a manner of expression, would anticipate this couplet with impatience, and applaud it with transport.

Whatever danger I ran in deviating from this style of acting, I had the courage not to violate my own judg-

ment. I spoke those verses with the petulance of a proud woman, who found herself compelled to acknowledge her feelings. The audience expressed no symptoms of disapprobation; but I had not the slightest applause.—I was, however, satisfied with the attempt. The actor who abruptly opposes the public, assembled to observe him, and adopts ideas contrary to those generally received, ought, however he may have reason on his side, to think himself happy if he is not punished for his temerity. The history of Gallilee was present to my mind, and I played the rest of the character with the utmost success. When the play was over, I went, according to my custom, into the lobby, to hear what the critics had to

observe. I heard M. Duclos, of the French Academy, say, with a loud and positive tone of voice, “that the tragedy had been well played, that I had been excellent in several parts, but that I ought not to think of performing *tender characters* after mademoiselle Gaussin.

Astonished at so hasty a decision, fearing the impressions it might make on those who heard it, and overcome by an emotion of anger, I ran towards him and exclaimed,—“Rodogune a tender character, sir? A Parthian! a fury! who requires of her lovers the head of their mother and their queen!—This a tender character? A fine judgment yours truly!”

..... Abashed at what I had done, tears

came to my relief, and I fled, followed by general applauses.

The result of my studies since has confirmed the propriety of my first ideas. Voltaire has justified them in his commentary on Corneille ; and the public, as well satisfied with my haughtiness as with mademoiselle Gaussin's tenderness, has given me every reason to believe that I have not lost my labour, and that by arming ourselves with patience, respect, and reason, we may sometimes adopt our own ideas, and not implicitly follow the judgment and opinions of others.

VOYAGE TO BOURDEAUX.

THE farther I advanced in my studies, the greater were my apprehensions of success. I felt that, by adhering too closely to certain truths, I should offend against ordinary customs. The dread of experiencing the censure of the public did not allow me sufficient courage to ingraft upon the characters I performed that distinguishing and appropriate feature which, in my judgment, belonged to them. I feared even that I had not sufficiently reflected, to enable me to depend upon my own judgment. I felt the immense distance between theory and practice : I spent nearly ten years in researches equally profound and minute. Ex-

hausted by my labours, and impatient at finding them useless, I thought it my duty to repair to one of our provinces, and try the effect of my system upon a public unprejudiced, and uninfluenced by particular habits. I obtained permission to go to Bourdeaux.

The necessity of acquiring the immediate reputation of a fine actress induced me to employ, in the character of Phédre, in which I made my first appearance, that impassioned style of acting, haughtiness of deportment, and vehemence of expression, which had been so much applauded at Paris, and which the ignorant called nature. I quite astonished my auditory—I was extolled to the skies. The next day I

assumed the character of Agrippine, and played it, from beginning to end, in conformity to my own ideas.

This simple, easy, and natural style of acting, at first surprised them. An accelerated mode of utterance at the close of each couplet, and a regular gradation of vehemence, had been usually the signals for applause ; they knew it had only been customary to applaud such passages ; and as I did not resort to that style they had been used to, I was not applauded. Perfectly mistress of myself, I attentively observed their motions and their murmurs ; I distinctly heard it said in the first scene—*But that is fine acting ! that is fine !* The couplet following was generally ap-

plauded; and I was flattered, during the remainder of the character, with the most complete success. I presented thirty-two of my different characters, and always in my new-adopted style. Ariane was of the number; and the authors of the *Encyclopædia*, in the word *declamation*, have been kind enough to transmit to posterity the very marked and flattering homage which I received. However, still fearful, and doubting the judgment of the public, as well as my own, I determined to perform *Phédre*, as I had played it at first; and I beheld, with transport, that they were dissatisfied with it. I had confidence enough to say it was an essay which I thought it

my duty to make, and that I would play the same character differently, if they would indulge me with a third representation. I obtained permission—I adopted that style which was the result of my studies as completely as possible, and every one agreed there was no comparison.

Encouraged by the success I had obtained, I returned to Paris with the firm resolution either of quitting the theatre, or of finding my efforts approved: but I was received in a manner so flattering to me, that I remained on the stage thirteen years after.

I invite all persons of the same profession to reflect seriously upon my con-

duct : they will find that it is wrong always to refer the plaudits they may receive to the judgment of the audience—they are often nothing more than marks of kindness and encouragement—they sometimes proceed from habit, or from a comparison with actors of less talent, or less favoured by nature : I may even venture to say, they are sometimes the effect of ignorance or party ; for it is rare to find the public without its victim or its favourite. Every day a certain portion of the audience retire ; every day different persons compose it ; and, in the course of ten years, an audience does not consist of the same people. Tradition is lost ; and, for want of good actors and good judges, the stage reverts to that

mediocrity of ability which characterised its infancy.

Improve yourselves;—let truth be the constant object of your researches. By dint of attention and study, render yourselves worthy of forming a new public; and compel that public to acknowledge you pursue the most difficult of all professions, and not the most servile of all trades:

BAPTISM.

It is the custom in the little town in which I was born, to assemble in carnival time at the houses of the principal citizens, to pass the days in dancing and festivity. The curate of the

place, far from disapproving of these amusements, took a pleasure in increasing and partaking of them. On one of these festival days, my mother, who was only seven months gone with child, brought me into the world, between two and three in the afternoon. I was so small and so weak, that they did not think I should live a moment. My grandmother, a respectable and pious old woman, wished me to be taken immediately to church, to receive my passport to heaven. My grandfather and the midwife conducted me to the parish church ; it was shut ; even the beadle was not there. A neighbour observed, that they were all assembled at the house of Mr.—They carried me there. The curate appeared

dressed like a harlequin, and his vicar in pantaloons. They conceived my danger so pressing, that they had not a moment to lose. They forthwith took from the closet all that was requisite for the ceremony; they silenced the violin for a short time, and pronounced the usual forms of baptism; after which they conducted me home.

LETTER.

This letter is the only one I can find among near 1500, which, in the course of twenty years, I have written to the Compté de Val . . . It may give some idea of their general tenor, and perhaps justify those sentiments in which I indulged myself.

1100 201 Anspach, 20th February, 1774.

“ Born to experience those passions to which tenderness and love give birth, I cannot conceive how it is possible to hate any one. If you retain the slightest remembrance of my character, and the sentiments with which you have inspired me, you will easily suppose I shall not commence with yourself. You have made it necessary for me to cease loving you, and, contrary to my expectations, I have strength enough to overcome my attachment. You have done all in your power to leave to one of the most tender hearts that ever beat the painful choice of indignation or indifference: but I have neither the power nor the inclination to cease cherishing your

memory. Notwithstanding your conduct, I have constantly preserved the most ardent and disinterested friendship towards you ;—it is that sentiment which impels me to answer you. Since you are in affliction, it is my duty not to desert you.

“ To be at variance with your mother is a circumstance which justly afflicts you. I am, however, persuaded that much of what you have been told concerning her is false. Surely her animosity cannot extend so far as to curse you. Haughty and violent as she is, she has, perhaps, proceeded too far. The pride of a woman and a mother may, perhaps, prevent her from conceding ; but the most violent are not always the

most wicked. I, for certain, know that she is more inflamed by grief than hatred. Madame de Sauvigni, who is often with her, mentions her to me in every one of her letters. You are deceived : but judge for yourself ; compare the austerity of her manners, and the excesses of your gallantries, the order with which she conducts her affairs, and the disorder of yours ; remember the disdain with which you treated your brother whom she loved ; the levity of your conduct towards M. Dam . . . , whose person and fortune were the objects of her attentions ; your disapprobation of every thing she did, and the sarcastic and insulting manner in which you expressed yourself ;—add to these the mortification of seeing the whole

fortunes of her house pass into hands she detests ; the horror of beholding that name she so idolizes perish with you ; and herself deprived of the chief gratifications of old age, the pleasure of renewing her youth in the persons of her grand-children. Are not all these sufficient to make your mother think unfavourably of you ? Her character is not distinguished for that patience and mildness which should make allowance for yours. She has ill qualities I acknowledge ; but she is your mother. Which of you ought to yield to the other ? What she requires of you is no more than a just tribute which you owe to society and to nature. Your name and your fortune make celibacy a crime in you. You think she hates the wo-

man who interests you, merely because that woman does interest you ; but recollect the sentiments she has always expressed towards me ; the inquiries she has made to know whether any fruit of our union existed ; a tie by which she consented to unite us. What am I ? At that time every thing proved you ardently loved me ; I alone was ignorant that you really did not. No ! Val. . . . no !—it is neither yourself, nor the object of a natural attachment, she pursues ; it is a married woman who appears publicly as your mistress, and who, though her husband is yet living, requires from you a promise of marriage—a woman whose age allows no room to hope for heirs ; a woman who detains you where, since the mar-

riage of mademoiselle de Mari, you can find nothing worthy your notice ; where you are led into the most ruinous expences, and where all hate you from the bottom of their soul ; where, with the exception of three women, you tell me all have been devoted to your inclinations: Do you hope your mother can pardon such levity? Do you expect that injured husbands, and neglected lovers, can ever become your friends? To see you so forgetful of yourself is enough to render your mother disconsolate.

“ Open your eyes to your real interests; renounce your chimeras of ostentation, which degrade true grandeur; restore that order into your affairs which

your age, your good sense, and your honour impose as a duty upon you; quit a place where you can only commit errors which will be fatal to the repose of your old age, and the glory of your present moments. Your name, your fortune, all the flattering gifts of nature, enable you to make a choice suitable to you. If you were to experience the happiness of being a father, I am sure you would not regret the dissipated life you now lead; but, whatever may be the consequence, you will, at least, preserve your latter days from the horror of being surrounded by flatterers, intriguers, and parasites.

“ The second source of your uneasiness is the desertion of your friends:

Be just:—what have you done for them? In order to nourish friendship, the charms of confidence, and the services and attentions due to society, are required. Constantly absent, without the least necessity on your part; having announced, six years ago, that you would not serve in the army if there was not a war in ten years; continually talking of your dislike to Paris, and your determination to fix your residence in Provence; rich, without reserving to yourself the means of rendering a service to any one; too distant for them to derive from you that advice and consolation which daily circumstances require;—what have you left for the attachment of your friends to nourish itself on? The world resembles the

woman, who said to her lover, "Sir, if it was in my power to love any one who is absent, I should love God."—It is to add to his happiness, to add to the pleasures of his existence, that any one forms an attachment. Restore yourself to your friends, and you will soon recover those hearts, of the loss of which you complain.

"This letter, already too long, makes me apprehensive lest I should be the third object of your uneasiness. I admit I have no longer the right to engage your attention; and I am already in a situation so wretched, that I am apprehensive of the least circumstance that may increase it. This letter will perhaps be the last I shall ever write to

you ; and I desire that you will once peruse it in my heart. — “ Did you consult your own when you wrote to me ?—I regret you—you shall ever influence my destiny—We may live together—We may yet be united ?—Ah ! Val. . . , you still deceive me ; or rather, you still deceive yourself ! *You will never find my heart divided !* I believe it is still as true and as tender as ever ; and your misconduct assures me that madame de R. . . . does not resemble me. I see through the illusion by which you attempt to amuse me. I have twenty times pardoned your infidelity ;—you expect the same indulgence for your new amours ; you hope that I will approve the

shameful union you have promised me: Undeceive yourself. Generous enough to release you to the enjoyment of your own inclination, the moment I found you had new duties to fulfil, I disengaged you from your oaths and promises which had united us : but, in renouncing my lover and my husband, I, at least, expected that my friend would have consoled me by a marriage which would have caused neither himself nor me to have blushed. I had hoped to find you eternally worthy my esteem and regret ; and if you think me capable of contemplating, without horror, an infamous and criminal woman, dishonouring and disgracing the days of her wretched spouse, you have cruelly

misconceived my character. No! never will you have my approbation. It is to your honour, and your duties, I have sacrificed my love and my rights. The heart capable of such an effort can never consent to your shame.

“ If you was under the dominion of a real passion, I should be the first to pity and excuse you. Alas! you have but too well convinced me how mighty is its power. The females that compose your society are a sufficient proof that it is not love which has turned your brain. I can find no name for your infatuation. However, let your pursuits be what they may, we are separated for ever. My age, my habitual infirmi-

ties, the deep impression of the miseries you have caused me, *the wickedness of men in general*, and the nature of the climate I inhabit, have reduced me to the last degree of grief and weakness. I do not think it possible ever to re-establish my health ; but if, contrary to my expectations, my days should be prolonged, it is to the Margrave they shall be consecrated. Every day his confidence affords me additional motives for my gratitude ; and, since my happiness must depend on his, he shall receive the homage of all the remaining moments of my life. With the exception of my health, my life never passed more agreeably. I have friends who allow me to render them every service

in my power. The enjoyments I now possess could never be restored to me. We shall, assuredly, never meet again : but, while I live, whatever may be my situation, you may depend, *at least*, upon the most tender and lasting friendship. I pardon you for the miseries I have suffered on your account, and intreat you to cherish my memory.—My tears will not suffer me to see what I have written.—Adieu Val !”

THE ROBE;

OR,

THE VISIT OF M. LE MARECHAL DE R....

“ WHAT! is it you, M. le Maréchal? In the name of wonder, what fine woman, or what weighty business, brings you out so early?”

“ I ordered my coach at nine o’clock. I came from the farther end of Paris: and though I have a number of places to call at, I could not resist the desire of paying you a visit. I have a favour to ask of you: I give a grand entertainment and spectacle this evening to the Duchesse de Gra....; she will bring her friends with her; her brother will be there; I know he loves

you ; and I am come to intreat you to honour my *fête* with your presence."

" You astonish me beyond measure. You and the duchess were, but the other day, at daggers drawn ; and now you are giving entertainments in honour of her.—What may be the cause of this wonderful revolution?"

" I have not time to tell you the whole history ; I have too much business on my hands. They are to meet at half past five, and the spectacle commences at six. I wish you would come before. I promised to write out the *Feuille des Gratifications* ; but you will have the goodness to do it for me, as you know the merits of the performers better than I do."

“ I am sorry, M. le Maréchal, that I cannot oblige you : it is out of my power to stir out to day.”

“ Why so ?”

“ I am ill.”

“ That’s impossible : no one can look better than you do. You have not finished at your toilet ; and, I’ll engage for it, no one will suppose you to be more than thirty years of age.”

“ You are extremely gallant this morning. I however assure you, that I am really unwell ; and, besides, I am engaged in studies which I cannot leave.”

“ Bad reasons. I know there is nothing new preparing for the stage. I am sure it is some *rendezvous* that prevents you ; and that it is a love-en-

gagement, to which you wish to dedicate the day.

“ Val . . . is not at Paris.”

“ Well, but somebody else is.”

“ You teaze me.”

“ You teaze me more.”

“ But why do you wish me to be at your *fête*? What service shall I be of?”

“ You will be amused. There will be two charming comic-operas, sung by the pretty Necelle. It is now near noon; and I beg, in God’s name, that you will be of the party; I shall certainly quarrel with you if you are not.”

“ If I must tell you the truth, I have no robe to go in!”

“ You jest.”

“ Alas ! no.”

“ Why, you have the finest wardrobe possible.”

“ I have none at all. The bad season we have had at the theatre has forced me to sell the greater part of my clothes and jewels ; and all the rest are in pledge. I have not a single thing with which I can appear abroad, particularly at a *fête*.”

“ What ! have you not even a black robe ?”

“ A black robe !—a pretty dress to go to a *fête* in !”

“ It is not a *fête* ; it is only a simple entertainment.”

“ Well ! but I have no one to accompany me.”

“ Take mademoiselle d'Epin.”

“ Will she go ?

“ Yes.”

“ Ah ! now I perceive why you are so pressing. She is a charming woman, is she not ?”

“ Ask the Duke de Du....; he knows better than I do. He is enraged against me ; but our dispute may be accommodated,”

“ He will think me an accomplice with you ; and I do not wish to be implicated in your disputes.”

“ Now you talk as if you was on your throne ;—but, prithee, let us finish. I have engaged mademoiselle d'Epin, and she will call and take you up at four o'clock. Be condescending for once, and agree to accompany her.”

“ Well, I will take pity on you : I will be there, I promise you, on my word. ”

“ Now you are really a charming woman. ”

Thus ended the conversation between me and the Maréchal ; and he left me.

SEQUEL OF THE DAY.

Mademoiselle d'Epin called, agreeable to the appointment ; but I was so long at my toilet, that it was late when we arrived. The Maréchal was too much engaged in preparing the spectacle to attend to us ; but he sent his valet-de-chambre, to desire us to go to his study after it was over, where I should find such papers as were necessary for the business we had previously agreed upon.

A few moments after, we saw madame la Duchesse de Gr.... arrive, escorted by M. le Maréchal de R....—M. le Duc de Ch.... gave his hand to madame la Duchesse de Lau...., and M. le Duc de Gon...., to madame la Comtesse de Egm....—I have forgot the rest.

In passing madame la Duchess de Gr...., whose voice I had never before heard, she said, “*Ab ! there’s mademoiselle Clairon !*” Her countenance, at that moment, was neither expressive of pleasure nor kindness.—I thought she appeared rather displeased at seeing me there. All the other ladies saluted me in the most affable manner; but nothing could console me for the uneasiness the behaviour of madame la Duchesse de Gr.... had caused me.

My head ached—the spectacle wearied me—I wished it to be over, that I might retire. I was apprehensive of some new apostrophe when she should pass me again : but, in place of it, she only honoured me with a simple inclination of the head, which, in the state of mind I then was, I thought highly flattering. The Duc de Choi.... had often observed me, but he did not speak—I had foreseen as much.

When they were all gone, we repaired to the Maréchal's study by a private staircase. All the doors of the apartment were opened ; and the noise, and the number of lights, convinced us there was a great deal of company in the room adjoining the one we were in. I found on the writing-desk all

the papers that were necessary, and set to work ;—but the pen escaped from my hands—I heard the dreadful voice that had so often terrified me—I thought the thunder was bursting upon my head:—but, by dint of attention, I was sensible of agreeable and pleasant sounds, intermixed with the noise which had created so much alarm. I cheered my spirits, and happily the sounds ceased.

My impatience induced me several times to get up and look whether the company were going. Madame Gr.... observed something, and said to the Marechal,—“ There’s company in your closet.”—“ It is mademoiselle Clairon,” said he ; I have requested her to write out the *Feuille des Gratifications*.”—“ I shall be very happy to see her : request

her to come forward.”—The Maréchal whispered to my companion, then took me by the hand, and led me into the great room, where I found madame la Duchesse de Lau. . . ., and M. le Duc de G. . . .—They both rose to salute me.

MAD. DE GR. . . .

I am glad to see you.—Why were you not of our party?

MAD. CLAIRON.

I could not flatter myself that my company would have been agreeable ;—your desire alone could have induced me to intrude myself.

MAD. DE GR. . . .

I have long been desirous of your acquaintance. I never fail being at the theatre when I know you are to perform, particularly when Corneille's plays

are acted. I have seen Cinna three nights running. Your style of speaking in this character is really astonishing. (*Then turning to the duchess*) Have you ever seen her in that character?

MAD. DE LAU..... (*In a mild tone of voice*).

No; I have never had that pleasure.

MAD. DE GR.....

Do go and see her: you will be enchanted with her; she is quite surprising.

M. LE DUC DE GON.....

I have heard her as well as you have, and have been wonderfully delighted with her.

M. LE MARECHAL.

Mademoiselle Clairon is certainly the greatest actress that ever appeared. I have seen Duclos, Demares, the famous Lecouvreur; but she excels them all.

MAD. DE GR....

I am of the same opinion.—But why are you dressed in black?

MAD. CLAIRON.

I am in mourning for one of my relations.

[*The Maréchal burst into a fit of laughter.*]

MAD. DE GR....

What are you laughing at?

M. LE MARECHAL.

At the poor creature she has just killed.

MAD. DE GR....

What do you mean?

M. LE MARECHAL.

The dress she has on is the only one she has got.

MAD. DE GR....

You are jesting: I have heard she has a most elegant wardrobe.

MAD. CLAIRON.

To supply the demands of the theatre, I have been obliged to dispose of all my dresses.

MAD. DE GR....

How so? Are you not allowed so much for your dresses on the stage?

MAD. CLAIRON.

True; but 2000 crowns, whether the season is a good or bad one, are scarce sufficient for common necessities, especially as there are no private gratuities from court. However, I should not have avowed my necessities, had

it not been for the levity of M. le Maréchal.

MAD. DE GR....

M. le Maréchal, you have really shocked me.

M. LE MARECHAL.

It is her own fault. Why does she refuse to do as others do? She might roll in gold 'if she pleased; but she is only sensible of a pure and delicate passion. She is for real love, constancy, and, what I call, an imaginary passion. She has refused the most advantageous offers, and is now starving with her Celadon.

MAD. CLAIRON (*after a short besitation*).

Since, ladies, you have allowed of expressions so unworthy your ears, I hope

you will deign to indulge me in the liberty of a reply.

BOTH LADIES.

Nothing can be more just.

MAD. CLAIRON.

My lord, you are daily assailed by general and private demands for that assistance which the performers cannot do without. Our distress is excessive; our receipts daily diminish; yet, I trust, you will admit it is neither owing to our want of talents, industry, or zeal. We have among us both male and female performers, who are advanced in years: it is impossible for them to have recourse to any other employment: at least, lend your assistance to them. You have desired me to write out the

Feuille des Gratifications for you ; deign to cast your eyes over that of the theatre. You will find my name effaced, and the hundred pistoles I have been accustomed to receive divided among the rest.

M. LE MARECHAL.

She is a perfect *Belisa*.

MAD. CLAIRON.

However you may have thought me incapable of making such a sacrifice ; yet, I trust, it will convince you of the necessity of assisting us. But let us quit a subject that regards me personally. You have just had the goodness to say, “ I possessed great talents.” I may, therefore, be allowed to observe, that there are others of the same opinion in many parts of Europe.

The Empress Elizabeth has offered me 4000 francs a year, a house furnished, a coach, a table for six persons morning and evening. I refused the offer, and you have expressed your opinion that I did right. This situation, however, would have been more permanent, more advantageous, and more honourable than that of a kept mistress; and, I expected, that such a sacrifice, when made known to the king, or to my superiors, would have prevented me the horrible alternative of wanting bread, or of disgracing myself to obtain it: but all I have derived from it is the honour of seeing my picture of *Medea** ornamented with a fine

* This picture, painted by Carloo-Vanloo, first painter to the king, had been given me by madame

frame, by the king's orders; and on your part, my lord, every possible proof

Galitzin, a Russian princess, who deigned to consider me as her friend, and who was charged with all the proposals of the Empress Elizabeth. Lewis the XVth. wished to see this picture.—After having long examined it, he made the most flattering eulogium on the painter, and the manner in which he had treated the subject. He said,—“There is no one but myself who ought to provide a frame for this picture : I therefore desire that as handsome a one as possible may be made for it.” The frame cost 5000 francs. The reductions of my estate, by L'Abbé Terrai, left me no other resource than that of selling my effects, and retiring to Germany. The Margrave of Anspach pressed me to take up my residence in his estates. I was obliged to dispose of this fine picture. M. Randon de Bosette offered me 24,000 francs. I required a few days to determine.—In the mean time the Margrave wrote to me, that if it was my intention to sell it, he wished to have the preference. I resolved to make him a present of it. I was asked fifty louis to clean it, pack it up, and con-

of levity, inconsiderateness, and inhumanity. Assuredly I could not have expected them from the friendship you have ever expressed for me. Know, my lord, that it is impossible to be a great actress without possessing an uncommon elevation of soul. I am entrusted with the representation of characters the most dignified and important the world has ever seen. I cannot, at the same time, be Semiramis and Marion de Lorme. I have neither birth nor fortune wherewith to make myself respected : but my soul, infinitely above my situation, imposes it on you as a duty to treat me at least with respect.

vey it to Strasbourg ; I gave them. It is placed in the Margrave's palace. I know not whether he ever contemplates it ; but this I am sure of,—that he is ignorant of its value.

M. LE MARECHAL.

I assure you that.....

MAD. DE LAUR....

Make no reply, my lord ;—it is impossible to answer what she has said.

MAD DE GR....

Impossible—she is perfectly right.—But, mademoiselle, I think you are rather too high minded. My brother has told me that he offered you assistance, and that you refused it. How was that?

MAD. CLAIRON.

Be yourself my judge. M. le Duc de Choi... is a powerful nobleman ;—he is in rank only second to the king of France : he has all that good sense, amiableness of disposition, and high birth can bestow. The grace with which

he accompanies whatever he says or does makes him one of the most seducing persons in the world. I am sensible if I added the duties of gratitude to those sentiments with which he has inspired me, they would lead me too far. You, doubtless, cannot blame me for wishing to avoid so great a danger. Would I allow him reason to suspect that the respectful homage I so much delight to pay him was actuated by sordid interest? But to prove still more satisfactorily to you that my pride does not blind me,—monsieur le Maréchal has just told you that I am not possessed of a single robe—deign to make me a present of one, and I will honour myself by wearing it.

MAD. DE GR.... (*embracing Mad. Clairon*).

Charming creature! To-morrow you shall have one. I thank you for the preference, and for the agreeable moments you have enabled me to pass. You are fortunate, M. le Maréchal, that you are not going to sup with me—I should have found fault with you the whole evening. Mademoiselle, whenever you go to Versailles, call upon my brother; act with regard to him as you may think proper; but, at least, devote some of your moments to me.... I wish to converse with you;—promise that you will come and see me.

MAD. CLAIRON.

The duty you have imposed upon me it will give me pleasure to fulfil.

MAD. DE GR.... (*looking at her watch.*)

Ah, my God! it is near eleven o'clock. Who could have thought it had been so much? Let us be gone. When will you be at Versailles?

MAD. CLAIRON.

Next Thursday.

MAD. DE GR....

I shall expect you.

MAD. CLAIRON.

I will certainly not fail.

EXPLANATION

WITH

Her Serene Highness Madame la M.....

DEMANDED BY MYSELF.

MAD. CLAIRON.

I DARE entreat you, madam, to recollect that I have not arrived in your states but with your consent ; and that I have settled there only by your express orders, and, I may add, at your entreaties. I have resided on them these two years ; and, during that time, have done all in my power to destroy that cabal, the object of which was the ruin of the minister. The abuses I have prevented, the expenses I have reformed, the means I have recommended to extinguish the debts at twen-

ty-eight per cent interest ; my cares, my attentions, my services, towards all those who sought my favour, my forgiveness of injuries, my scrupulous attention to act as became me, my profound respect for your serene highness, the happiness I have restored to your soul by bringing back your husband to your arms, the obligation you are under to me for rendering that husband calm, content, and docile ;—all these considerations should leave no doubt in your breast as to the purity of my intentions and my conduct. In the mean time, madam, your kindness towards me diminishes daily. You deign to receive me, to admit me at your table ; whenever you address me, it is in the most respectful manner ; but

I have too much experience not to see that my presence is a restraint upon you, and that, in receiving me, you only yield to the fear of displeasing the M..... This change must have too great an influence over my destiny, not to induce me to demand the cause of it. Of what does your Highness accuse me? What have I done; or what has been said against me?

MAD. LA M.....

I cannot love the mistress of my husband.

MAD. CLAIRON (*after a moment's pause*).

The M... has related all his adventures to me; and you, madam, have confessed to me, that you have ever been neglected by him, and extremely ill-treated by his mistresses. I know,

among others, that madame la M. de B... absolutely insisted upon his divorcing you ; that she denied your superiority, even in your own court ; that, if she had not been restrained, she would have struck you ; and that all the rest, without exception, constantly tore your lord from your arms, and from your bed. This was the life you led for twenty years ; and, as the M..... must have a mistress, surely she who daily engages him to fulfil his matrimonial duties, who insists upon his neither coming in nor going out without seeing you, who obliges him to dine with you *tête-à-tête*, who procures you attentions and gallantries of which you never had an idea, is certainly a mistress of a very different

description from those who have preceded her; and, without the extremest injustice, you cannot refuse her your indulgence and your kindness.

MAD. LA M.....

You are going off with the M.....—
I shall never behold him again :—you
will absent yourself with him for ever.

MAD. CLAIRON.

I have experienced the severest illness since I have been here. Your climate, too cold and too rude for my age and infirmities, makes it necessary I should breathe for some time under more temperate skies. Besides, I have business which calls me to Paris, where the M..... will not follow me. He is going to Italy, and we shall join each other to meet you here again.

MAD. LA M.....

But is it you who have persuaded him to travel? He is not used to it. A thousand misfortunes may happen to him. I shall not have a moment's tranquillity.

MAD. CLAIRON.

Do you forget from whom the M..... is descended? Do you not know that the least emotion of discontent, or *ennui*, he manifests, makes every one tremble for the fatal consequences they may produce?

MAD. LA M..... (*affected*).

Ah, my God! that is but too true.

MAD. CLAIRON.

Let him then amuse himself. What would become of the country, what would become of you, if such a mis-

fortune should take place ? By duty, as well as fear, your ministers would give notice of it to the court of B..... You have no children :—you would have a regency, and all would be lost. If reason should afterwards return, the M....., in despair, might proceed to extremities. Support, therefore, with courage, an absence ordained by prudence, and bless my intentions, instead of cursing them.

MAD. LA M.....

Well, but he will not leave you ; and that greatly displeases me.

MAD. CLAIRON.

You have him with you all night, he dines with you every day, he never passes your apartment without entering it ; the rest of his time he devotes to

me. Surely that is not too much. I have sacrificed every thing to reside in his states. I sought only him ; and, if I am never to see him, nothing will be capable of detaining me. If you treat me better, I shall be oftener with you :—he will follow. By banishing me your presence, you at the same time force him to shun you.

MAD. LA M.....

But you pretend that he loves you in preference to me.

MAD. CLAIRON.

I do not pretend so ; but it may be so. He is your master, and not mine. You are not allowed to have a will of your own ; I have the power to enjoy mine, and sufficient good sense to make it feared and respected. I use rouge,

which gives me a younger and gayer look ; your paleness is an antidote to desire. He constantly finds you employed at your knitting needle, from which you never raise your eyes. He detests to see you so engaged ; yet cannot he obtain the least sacrifice on your part. I immediately throw whatever work I may be about into the window, lest the sight of it should offend him. You preach hatred towards his fellow-creatures, and that makes him unhappy ; I constantly recommend the love of human nature, which consoles him. The austerity of your deportment announces the respect you require on account of your rank. You are a wife, and that austerity may be deemed a virtue : I, who pity him that he is a

prince, endeavour at times to make him believe he is only a private individual, who has nothing to pretend to but his virtues. I exert the utmost of my judgment, experience, zeal, and humanity, to relieve him from that state of oppression in which his predecessors have placed him. In equally sharing his pains and his pleasures, I have the happiness of alleviating the former and increasing the latter. You, madam,—pardon me for what the situation you have placed me in compels me to say,—useless to the world, and abstracted from society, remain in a state of apathy which can only be construed into indifference, or something worse. That can never engage his affections.—In short, I cost him

nothing ; I have given him much ; and to this moment have neither received nor wished for any thing in exchange.

MAD. LA M.....

How ! nothing in exchange ! You have been paid a full equivalent for what you sacrificed ; and I know your house costs a great deal.

MAD. CLAIRON.

You are deceived : the expenses of my house are only for the M....., and those whom he invites. My health does not allow me to taste the delicacies he prepares. One plain simple dish is the only expense I occasion ; and I am sure I do not cost a florin a day : yet, since I have been here, I

have spent 14,000 francs of my own property.—With respect to the payment of the equivalent you speak of, I have never received any thing. I beg you will ask the M..... whether I impose upon you.

MAD. LA M.....

It is from him I understand you are paid.

MAD. CLAIRON (*rising*).

Luckily, I hear him in your chamber.

MAD. LA M..... (*stopping her*).

My God! what are you going to do? I shall have a fine scene.

MAD. CLAIRON (*opening the door*).

You have made it necessary for me to brave every thing. My lord, you

have told madame the M..... that you have paid me all I gave up to you. I prithee tell me when and how?

THE M.....

I hope you will pardon me. I did say so, I acknowledge.

MAD. CLAIRON.

But have you told truth? Have I been paid?

THE M.....

No; you have not. I told an untruth.

MAD. CLAIRON.

Madam, you hear.—My lord, I trust the revenge of a falsehood to your own heart, which will humble you more than I can. The only penitence I impose upon you is, to let me enjoy, un-

interrupted, the moments that madame la M..... is pleased to devote to me.

MAD. LE M.....(*observing her husband as he is retiring*).

What power you have over him !

MAD. CLAIRON.

You only see the empire of reason and truth over weakness. Turn it to your advantage. If I was in your place, my rivals should be mere play-things for me, without the power of making me fear them.

MAD. LA M.....

What can I do ?

MAD. CLAIRON.

Make yourself necessary to your lord. Study to be of service to him. You can do it more easy than I can. You

know the language, and are not unacquainted with the Germanic constitutions. Was I in your place, I would be prime-minister; I would, at least, put myself in a situation to oppose my enemies. If any commotion or disorder took place, during the absence of my husband, I would be the person to whom every one should look up with confidence for protection, and the restoration of order. This would be much more to your honour and advantage than knitting all day.

MAD. LA M.....

That would be the greatest happiness I could experience; but the M..... would never consent.

MAD. CLAIRON

Why?

MAD. LA M.....

The M..... is jealous of his authority.

MAD. CLAIRON.

He must entrust it to some one; he can do nothing without ministers. He has entrusted it to me, who am a stranger, and whose interest is assuredly far inferior to yours. Perhaps he fears your indolence. Are you sufficiently confident of yourself? Do you feel yourself possessed of all that knowledge, judgment, reflection, firmness, and wisdom, which great undertakings require?

MAD. LA M.....

I do think so. I would do all in my power.

MAD. CLAIRON.

Well, I will endeavour to obtain for

you, in future, the power of doing as much good, or as much evil, as you may please.

MAD. LA M..... (*rising with transport, and clasping mademoiselle Clairon in her arms, says—*)

Ah ! if you obtain that for me, I will confess I have never had any other friend but yourself.

MAD. CLAIRON.

Recollect, madam, that in the first private conversation I had the honour to have with you, I promised to do all in my power to promote your happiness. I have kept my word : I will continue to do so, and to restore calmness to your soul. Assure yourself that I am not the mistress of the M..... ; I have only the sentiments of a mother and a friend towards him ; and he only

cherishes and respects me under those titles. However slow may be the progress you make in politics, on which you are about to exercise yourself, you will soon be sensible that a mistress would neither confer so much honour upon you, nor entrust you with so much power, as I have done.

LETTER

To His Serene Highness Monseigneur

Le Margrave d'A——h.

Your unbridled passion for a woman, of whose disposition, unhappily, *you alone* was ignorant ; the destruction of your own plans and my prospects ; your total disregard of public opinion ; the licentiousness of your late conduct ; and your want of respect to your own age and dignity ; have compelled me to contemplate you as one who has thrown aside all restraint and decency, in compliance with the dictates of a depraved heart, or as one whose disordered intellect, while it excites pity, evinces, at the same time, the necessity

of confining, to prevent the injury he may inflict on others. The habit in which I had indulged of admiring your character, of giving you credit for your virtues, made me reject the least idea that might degrade you. I have therefore patiently supported my sufferings, on your account. Your inhumanity, your outrages, your ingratitude, have been insufficient to make me change the plan of conduct I had proposed to myself with regard to you. By my silence as to what respected your mistress, I have at least defeated the completion of the insult you intended towards me, by publicly quitting our house. As far as I was able, I have concealed, beneath a countenance constantly serene, and at times smiling, the

deep afflictions which have wounded both my soul and body; I have encouraged the belief that I did not disapprove of your conduct, and that I should ever regard you as my best of friends. But the period of dissimulation is past; —you have now arrived at your states; and whatever may henceforth be your conduct, I shall have no further apprehensions of its rendering me either culpable or accountable; for you will, doubtless, confess it is full time I should altogether reject your false protestations of friendship.

The veil, my lord, is fallen;—I am now convinced that I have never been any other than the wretched victim of your vanity, and of your ridiculous and

inconsistent humours. Had you been sincerely my friend, you would not have driven me, by a mean artifice, from your states, for the sake of madame de Ca..., madame Ku..., &c. &c. you would not have sacrificed my letters, every word of which was expressive of my tenderness and your duties ; you would have still continued to repose in me that confidence which I have never ceased to merit ; you would not have abused the prerogatives of your sex, and of your rank, to oppress and degrade me ; you would (whatever might have been the nature of your new attachment) have respected those sentiments, and that irreproachable conduct, which you knew, by the experience of seventeen years, had di-

stinguished me ; you would have been actuated by pity for my age, and my infirmities ; you would have given me credit for the disinterestedness and the utility of my advice. Convinced, by experience, of my condescension to your caprices and your passions, you would not have deserted a woman who had never been influenced by other pretensions, or by other sentiments towards you, than those which characterised the tenderest of mothers, and the truest of friends. I cannot conceive how you have avoided the blush of guilt for having so conducted yourself, that you cannot appear to me in any other light than that of an assassin, who has endeavoured secretly to destroy me. Just heaven ! can you be

the man whom I have extolled as the possessor of so many virtues?

I confess that, during the five last weeks of your stay at Paris, you have shown a more than usual skill in hypocrisy. You assumed an appearance of regard;—you, at times, forced me to believe that my esteem and friendship were still important to your happiness;—but my return to the world, and the reports that were in circulation respecting you, destroyed this moment of illusion. I learnt (but not without astonishment), the whole history of your conduct for the last seven or eight years;—your profound and systematic dissimulation I am now perfectly acquainted with. I perceive I have nothing to

pretend to, and that the connexion between us is dissolved, never again to be restored. You will, doubtless, applaud yourself for what you have done. —I, unhappy woman that I am, can never know consolation ! My soul, as tender as invariable, will carry to the tomb those sentiments which I have vowed to you. I pity you, I pardon you, and wish you as much happiness and glory as I experience regret and grief.

It is with infinite pain I lay at your feet the boons I have received from you. I will not dissemble that I cannot but expect this conduct will wound your dignity (alas ! I am far from wishing to offer you the least outrage) ; but

your conduct has imposed it on me as a duty. Recollect I have never been actuated by interested motives—that I never desired to add to my fortune, but as it afforded me the means of adding to your enjoyments:—recollect that you were not my sovereign, and that, to obtain the title of my benefactor, you ought to have preserved the character of my friend. I, my lord, am an unimportant being: but I have ever deported myself without disgrace, and enjoy the reward of a conscience without regret. The applause of my own heart is my chief consolation; and to my latest sigh I shall at least oblige you to esteem me.—Adieu! adieu for ever!

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

MONSIEUR L..., MADAME L..., AND
MADEMOISELLE CLAIRON.

M. L...

I MUST lay my complaints before you, and intreat you to give your judgment respecting them. The coquetry of madame L... renders me miserable: she wishes to please every one, without considering the pain she makes me suffer at the same time. Surely you cannot approve of such conduct?

MAD. CLAIRON.

You are extremely amorous M. L...

MAD. L...

He is jealous; nothing else, I assure you.

M. L...

I have been twice in my life amorous before I knew you. I thought I should have gone mad at the loss of the two first I loved. I was a whole year at the point of death ; yet, I am convinced, I did not love either of them so well as I love you.

MAD. L...

Well !—you love me—you possess me.—Is not that sufficient to render you happy.

MAD. CLAIRON.

Madame L... is only twenty years of age: the abundance of her ideas cannot allow her time for reflection. Exert a little patience, and, at the same time, do not let her depend too much upon the excess of your passion. Par-

ticularly, never let her think you are jealous. Jealousy is an equal degradation of both husband and wife. If, as I suppose, madame L... respects you, your suspicions must be offensive to her, and we cannot love those who insult us. If her conduct is not conformable to her duty, the continuation of your love is a reflection upon yourself. Your experience, and your dignity, cannot allow you to love what you cannot esteem.

MAD. L...

I am well persuaded I shall never fail in my duty : but take care that you do not adopt the advice that is given you. I should not be well pleased if you was to assume the appearance of loving me less. Such

conduct could never be acceptable to me. But, without being offended, I repeat, that, as your wife, it is my duty, as well as my inclination, to please you.

MAD. CLAIRON.

It must be confessed, that it is no less our duty, than it ought to be our inclination, to adopt our husbands' wishes. The desire of pleasing induces us to improve our beauties, and to correct and conceal our defects. We ought never to act or speak otherwise than in an obliging manner. Such a mode of conduct renders us perpetually alive to the pleasures of society, the happiness of our acquaintances, and the peace of our families ; it silences pride, and imparts a degree of

mildness to the disposition. It is, in my opinion, the germ of every female virtue ; and I regard those who are deficient in this duty as false or weak women.

MAD. L...

Ah ! I have won ! I am victorious ! Well, sir, you can have nothing more to say to me ; you are condemned by the mistress of art.

M. L...

How, mademoiselle ! You approve of her conduct !

MAD. CLAIRON.

Stop a moment. Answer me.—I would observe, that, in wishing to please, the object of our attempts must be either a man or a woman, young or old, &c. &c.

MAD. L...

Yes, every one,—the whole world.
There's no harm in that.

MAD. CLAIRON.

The undertaking is not easy ; but I admit that you alone may attempt it. I suppose that your desire to please results from your affection for your husband : you wish that he should be more sensible of his happiness by observing that all the world envies him. But are you are not afraid of exciting the presumption of a coxcomb, who may form hopes that a woman possessed of sensibility will consent to make him happy ? You wish to please every one, but surely you cannot wish to be loved by every one. It is not love that

MAD. L...

Pardon me, I wish to be loved as much as it is possible to love me. I wish that all men should be enamoured of me.

MAD. CLAIRON.

What service would that be of to you? Do you consider what misery you must necessarily create among your admirers.

MAD. L...

That's their business, not mine.

MAD. CLAIRON.

Not yours! Pardon me madam, you are imposing a greater trouble on yourself than you imagine. Coxcombs will think you serious, and you will have to justify yourself; sensible men will pity you, and you will have to regret

their ill opinion of you ; the bold and enterprising will assail you, and you will blush at the encouragement you have given them. Besides, what security have you that you will not be caught in your own snares.

MAD. L...

I know my duties,—they are dear to me, and I shall fulfil them.

MAD. CLAIRON.

Such is your intention, I make no doubt ; but you are young, you are unacquainted with men. Neither your education nor your husband have learnt you all they are capable of undertaking. I am persuaded you would shudder were I only to pourtray a slight sketch of them. Ready as they are to profit by every occasion, you would be

taken by surprise, in a moment of caprice, of humour, of sensibility, of enthusiasm, or of weakness.

MAD. L...

I have none of those failings. Blot them out.

MAD. CLAIRON.

You deceive yourself. You may not have them at this moment ; but you perhaps will some other day. A woman at twenty years of age may have formed principles which nothing can ever efface ; but time and circumstances may infinitely modify them. Be patient, madam, till the germs of your character are entirely developed. I am more than sixty years of age. I have made the study of myself as much my business as possible. The princi-

ples of my character are the same as ever they were ; but my ideas and sentiments have always depended on time and circumstances. From the researches I have made relative to the structure of our minds, and the various alterations that take place at different periods, added to the avowals I have obtained from a great number of women and medical men, I may be allowed to assure you that you will not always remain the same as you are at present.

MAD. L . . . (*previsibly*).

There are exceptions to the rule.

MAD. CLAIRON.

I agree there may be ; and I doubt not but you will afford a proof there are such. It is, therefore, not you I am concerned for ; it is for the men who

may become your admirers. The age of Celadons is past. In our age men are only to be made happy by yielding to their desires. What would they do? Your refusal would convince them that you had only been amusing them. I behold some dying with shame, and others with regret. I behold the violent and unjust, enraged at seeing their rivals more highly favoured, or more happy than themselves, appeal to the sword, and destroy each other, or, perhaps, commit violence on their own lives. But let me hope that you will have the happiness never to experience any thing of the kind. Your judgment may be able to repress the violence of the men; but how will you act with regard to the woman who may be deserted or

neglected for your sake? Can you expect that they will sacrifice their sentiments, their desires of revenge in your favour? No; you must expect to find yourself the subject of epigrams, ballads, and satires, of the most insulting nature; and, however virtuous you may be, you will never be able to prevent the public from thinking you are ~~not~~ a woman whose character is lost.

MAD. L . . .

This merits reflection. You make me shudder at my danger.

REFLECTIONS

UPON MARRIAGES OF INCLINATION;

OR,

WHY I HAVE REFUSED TO MARRY.



AMBITION is a passion so common, and, perhaps, so natural, that it may excite surprise, a woman, who has made every passion her study, who has herself been the victim of those which produce regret and repentance when the calmness of reason returns, should have rejected offers which flattered her vanity, and might have preserved her from the dangers of an indefinite and uncontrolled liberty. I acknowledge that my soul, superior to my situation and my errors, has ever induced me to contemplate unequal marriages with

sentiments of indignation or pity. I was never able to conceive how a woman could submit to descend to a state in life below that which she has received from nature. I cannot comprehend how she can reconcile it to her feelings, to debase herself by her choice. She can only be influenced by her desires, or the apprehension of remaining without a protector. This last is the only motive which can excuse her. It is even possible that her conduct may be really meritorious, if, in referring to the state of independence she has left, she does so in order to do greater honour to the one she has assumed. But I have seen so many unhappy marriages, between noble ladies and plebeians, that I have often smiled at the expense

of those who have been the dupes of them.

The men have the privilege of raising whatever woman they may fancy to their own rank ; but a disproportion of situation, with regard to the object of their choice, cannot escape the severity of public censure. It is in vain any one attempts to disregard the prejudices of the world. Whosoever braves them, is sure, sooner or later, to become their victim. Besides, how can a woman hope that the man will continue to love her, whom she has rendered less dear to his family, and less respectable among his equals ? True love is so rare ; it is so difficult to find an object to justify it ; the different events

of life, the experience of different ages, the inconstancy and multiplicity of our desires, and the comparative short duration of our real wants, all combine in producing such considerable alterations in our moral and physical situation, that it becomes us, at least, to reserve the consolation of being pitied, and to avoid the possibility of self-reproach.

Upon what are those violent passions founded which men blindly follow?—Upon beauty, which all the world envies; upon virtue, which is disregarded; upon fortune, which is a temptation to those who have none; upon the seductive charms of the mind, and the admiration of grace and talent. These I believe are all I can enume-

rate: but beauty soon passes away, and it is rarely accompanied with those qualities which can console for its loss. Its usual attendants are pride and folly: these soon produce disgust, regret, and desertion; and reciprocal outrage is, in a very short time, all that remains to distinguish the pair who have united themselves from motives of personal beauty.

Virtue ought to find admirers, and be preferred to every thing in the world:—But is it real, is it pure? We are very deceiving. Our education teaches us to dissemble; our interest frequently renders it necessary we should do so: for whatever reason there may be to suppose us virtuous, it is scarce possible that the characters,

the ignorance, the misery, and the force of example of the women themselves on the one hand, and the seduction and wickedness of the men on the other, should not disprove the supposition. It is at least imprudent to impute it to any one without due reflection, or to repose your honour and liberty in the hands of any one, without knowing whether the object is deserving of the trust.

Riches.—If we do not derive them from our family, whence can they come? —Women of inferior rank, and born poor, have no resources but in labour, talents, or vice.—She who labours can scarce preserve herself from poverty.

The emoluments of the greatest ta-

lents, were, in my time, inadequate to the situation in life of the person possessing them; and she who would not disgrace herself had not the means of living, with any degree of comfort, without the protection of the great, and the trifling and momentary relief of her sovereign.

It is then from vice alone that these riches can be produced, and that vice——No! I will not endeavour to paint it;—the horror with which it inspires me would make the pen fall from my hand. Who is there that is insensible to the scandal of those mercenary bargains, by which the vilest of women suffer the property, acquired by labour or inheritance, the dowry of a wife, or the fortunes of children, to be

laid at their feet? Where is the nation that does not suffer from the incontinence of its sovereign? Tolerated as this vice is, no one dissembles that it is the most dishonourable of all others. How is it possible there should exist souls base enough to partake in so shameful a salary? The men have so many ways of making themselves respected,—birth, strength, the arts, the sciences, their genius, open so many roads to their wants and their ambition, that, when they resort to such a source of existence as this, they cannot flatter themselves with escaping public contempt, and even the contempt of those with whom they associate.

Seduction.—I may be allowed to say, that few women have possessed in a

greater degree than myself the means of establishing its empire ; and, I may even assert, of justifying it. To all those flattering gifts with which nature can adorn a woman, she has added the courage and disposition of a man of gallantry. All my engagements were ever sacred ; all my duties were dear to me. By nature as much actuated by pride as by sensibility, I looked only to my own labours for the acquisition of glory and property. Obligated to meditate incessantly on all the great personages of antiquity, upon their virtues and their foibles, my soul necessarily became elevated, and my heart softened. The variety of the characters I supported, the passions I portrayed, daily satisfied the frivolous taste

of my nation. The applause I received justified the homage that was paid me. My society was composed of men of letters, celebrated for their wisdom and learning, and of men of the world, whose manners were irreproachable. Whatever might make me suspected of ambition, levity, or interest, was scrupulously avoided. Women of the first distinction deigned to honour me with their friendship and personal confidence, in addition to that protection which they granted out of respect to my talents. Assured that I should never show myself undeserving, my superiors have never refused to receive me, to attend to me, or to bestow the favours I requested. My celebrity extended beyond the bounds of my own country.

It is pleasing to my soul that, in my advanced stage of life, I can retrace the obligations I had to please the public. I am a woman,—humility is generally a mask on our sex ; yet I can say that my character never would allow me to dissemble. It is in the power of every one who ever saw me to describe me such as I really am ; and it is his duty to do so, as it is the only means by which I can stand exculpated for the passions with which I may have inspired others.

I will not speak of the fortunes I have rejected : I never considered the offers of them but as insults.

Four different times have the sacred

ties of marriage been proposed to me. Birth, honour, and fortune, left me nothing to desire.—I refused the three first, because I did not love; and the fourth, because I loved too well.

I had too deeply studied the human heart to expect a lasting passion: I had too much reason not to respect prejudices, too much love to degrade him who was dear to me, too much pride to deprive myself of the means of esteeming myself.

I received as many letters and assurances of affection as my lovers thought proper to address to me; I consented even to repeat them on my part; and, during nineteen years, my fortune, my

will, and my conduct, have left me no reason to doubt the respect with which I fulfilled my engagements. By my method of eluding a definitive answer to the pressing solicitations which were made me during thirteen years, I contrived to bestow daily marks of my tenderness and affection. The struggles of my heart on these occasions can only be appreciated by myself. It is to them I ascribe a considerable portion of the misery I now experience. But of what importance are my miseries? Of what importance is even my life? I have nothing to reproach myself with.

Although the Comte de V.... had great expectations*, yet his mother

* The property of his mother was settled upon him.

allowed him only a very moderate income. He was greatly in debt:—his rank obliged him to live at a very expensive rate. He loved pleasure and high living; and, to satisfy his wants and his tastes, I sold every superfluity I possessed, except what was necessary for my theatrical expenses, for which I held myself accountable to the public and the authors. I deprived myself of every thing.

At the most pressing period of our distresses, I became acquainted with madame de Gallitzin, a princess of Russia. By one of those fortunate occurrences which cannot be accounted for, this lady became so passionately fond of me, that she could not pass

two hours in the day without seeing me, or writing to me. Confidence is soon established between two women who love each other, and who are constantly in each other's company. She entirely opened her heart to me, and I likewise unfolded mine to her without the least reserve. She was much affected at my situation. She was rich and generous ; and the offers of assistance she made me were every way worthy of her ; but I refused them altogether*. Not that the favours of so respectable a friend would have dishonoured me : but I

* It has been publicly said that I have received large sums from this princess. Nothing can be more false. My picture of Medea, a dress which I have had by me these twenty years, and a trimming of lace which I shall preserve as long as I live, are the only presents I ever received from her.

could not bear to appear actuated by mercenary motives. I have often wanted necessaries ; but I consider those moments as the proudest of my life. I could have wished to possess the riches of the world to offer them to him who was dear to me : but I thought I should have degraded both his heart and my own, by presenting him with the gifts of another. Love alone possesses the right of ennobling the assistance a man receives from a woman. The affection of the princess for me increased ;—the idea of leaving me was insupportable, and induced her to procure my invitation to Russia. The Empress Elizabeth, through the medium of her minister, requested permission of the court of France, that I

might depart; and offered me an establishment of ~~40~~⁴⁴000 francs, to be deposited yearly in the hands of such notary in France as I should nominate, a house, a coach, and a table for six persons. Had I been influenced by a passion for a beloved object, I should not have hesitated a moment. France is, perhaps, of all others, the country where talents are most justly appreciated; but there is no one more ungrateful towards them.

I informed the Count. Disgusted at his own country, in consequence of the conduct of the court towards him, he advised me to accept the offer, and promised that he would follow me. These words made me extremely uneasy. I no longer considered the ad-

vantages I might acquire, but dreaded the losses he would sustain. The princess desired us to communicate the whole of our sentiments to her ; and her answer was, that if he would marry me, and afterwards accompany me, he should enjoy the same rank he held in France, and the necessary pension to support it. To give still more effect to her promises, the princess assured us, that her own palace should be the only place of our residence. The Count accepted the offer : and the idea that he was indebted to me for his fortune and his advancement, even seduced me to approve of it. Happily I fell sick. Freed from the necessity of attending to my studies and my duties, I neces-

sarily had a more than usual portion of time on my hands. I had time to scrutinize my own soul, and inquire of it how it would be able to reconcile such a new mode of life with its former principles. The justice of the reflection appeared before me in its full force, and seemed to address me in these words : “ Ah, wretched woman ! what an imprudent step are you on the point of taking ! Who can depend on the wavering and unstable disposition of a human being ? What love was ever eternal ? What man, who may pretend to every thing, can pardon himself for having sacrificed all for a woman ? You are a person without family or connections : what security have you that he will not blush at feeling himself be-

holden to you? Have you forgot, that she who would pretend to the esteem of her husband ought not to commence by becoming his mistress; particularly if it is not the only error of her life? What will be your lot, should his love be extinguished? Seven years older than he is, can you flatter yourself that your charms will continue as long as his passion and desires? Are not his former infidelities a sufficient proof of what time, regret, and remorse, may produce? You will have to defend yourself against the charge of ambition, which an irritated family will urge against you. You will be humbled by those women who will think themselves disgraced by your being raised to a level with them.

Malice and Envy will unite against you, in order to mark you as the object for every species of injury. The public, who never consider the motives of any one, will repeat the cry of indignation against you. Even though it were possible the world should shut its eyes, and preserve silence, will your lover always continue to adore you, nor ever be actuated by regret? Can you flatter yourself that you will always be satisfied with your own conduct? Can your delicacy approve of your taking advantage of the empire you have over him? Have not your own character, and the course of your studies, convinced you, that the soul capable of rejecting all the advantages which are offered, is a thousand times

more noble than the one that accepts them ?”

All was determined : my illusion disappeared,—I remained unmarried and poor.—I did not depart for Russia ; but, by sacrificing my love, my fortune, and my vanity to my duty, and by thereby acquiring the means of esteeming myself, I have assuredly gained more than I have lost.

LETTER

To Madame V

O YOU ! whom I love with all the effervescence of youth ; you, whom an acquaintance of sixty-nine years, whom my observation and experience compel me to prefer beyond all other women ! aid me with your virtues and your understanding. Before I leave this mortal life, I would know what happiness is : not that I hope for, or pretend to it, on my own account. My age and misfortunes are insurmountable obstacles ; but if it were possible, I could wish to be assured that it was capable of extending over the whole human race ;

that it would crown the wishes of persons who are dear to me:—I should then die content.

I hear it spoken of wherever I go. It has been the object of all my actions. I have been in search of it since I first drew my breath. The various forms under which it has been represented to me bear so little resemblance to each other, they give rise to so many abstract ideas, that I can only compare them to clouds which the winds change to different shapes, and destroy again, the moment the figures seem to be formed. Notwithstanding my anxiety, my activity, and my researches, I, as yet, know it only by name. Do you believe it

has really an existence? Do you believe it is possible to obtain it? I hoped to find it by abandoning my whole soul to the various sentiments of nature—humanity, love, and friendship. Nothing has succeeded. Certain agreeable illusions, fed by that hope which is ever the companion of youth,—a fine figure, talents, reputation, a correct judgment, a sensible and, perhaps, elevated soul, have, in like manner, deceived me. In the course of my labours, and my commerce with the world, I have only found subjects for sorrow, tears, and regret.

The sages of antiquity asserted that Hope was the only good that remained in the box of Pandora; they said no-

thing of happiness : this, to my mind, is a proof they were unacquainted with it.

The sublime Diderot gave you existence. His knowledge of human nature, of the arts and sciences, immense as it was, has made no discovery with regard to the subject of happiness. Some other person had treated of it in the Encyclopedia ; but, doubtless, Diderot did not believe in its existence. In immortalizing every branch of human knowledge, his pure and beneficent soul would not have omitted the most important of all others.

It may, however, be owing to the excess of our vices that he was discou-

raged; and, perhaps, he was willing to communicate this supreme felicity only to a few beings capable of enjoying it. You, whom he cherished as the purest and most interesting of all his works; you, whose happy gifts of nature, united with every virtue, render so worthy of enjoying happiness; you are surely acquainted with his secret. Do not refuse a request which proceeds from a sentiment of the most tender and disinterested nature. Tell me only whether such a thing as happiness exists? and whether you are acquainted with the means of fixing its habitation near you?

But, alas! I fear you are as distant from it as myself, and that you are unable to give me any information on the

subject. I cannot dissemble that I observe your health to be weak and declining. Notwithstanding the satisfaction you impart to all around you; notwithstanding the constant equality you observe in your whole conduct and speech; yet I dare assert that my attentive friendship has sometimes surprised you in a langour of the most afflicting nature.—Would to God I may have been deceived! But I fear you suffer still more in your mind than in your body.—Alas! if you cannot be happy, happiness is as chimerical as our fairies and genii; and I shall believe in future that we are only influenced by misfortune.

LETTER

To the Margrave d'A——h.

THE profound retirement to which I have devoted the remainder of my life, and the prospect of the tomb, to which I must soon descend, ought to shut my heart against every human consideration. But as it is impossible for me to cease cherishing your memory, and wishing for your happiness and glory, I think I should fail in my duty, if, at the present juncture, I hesitated to write to you. My conduct will at least prove to you that no resentment lurks in my breast, and that I am willing to believe you as just and as good as formerly.

I understand you are more earnestly solicited than ever to yield up your states ; and I am assured it is likely you will give your consent.—I cannot believe it :—you are surely incapable of injuring yourself, and committing such an outrage against your own interest and dignity.—You cannot have forgot what you have said to me on this subject,—what you have an hundred times repeated to the virtuous Baron de Gemmingen in my presence,—“ I love my subjects too well to renounce the pleasure of rendering them happy.—For a monarch to quit his throne, is to prove that he is unworthy of filling it. I could willingly consent to be no more than a private individual ; but I should blush to become so by my own

account. Sole arbiter of my fortune and my will, master of disposing of all I possess, enjoying the gratitude and affection of my subjects, to whom I have sacrificed every thing, I will never commit such an act of folly as to entrust my happiness in the hands of others, or condescend to receive a stipend from any one." I might make a volume of the variety of noble, judicious, and truly consistent observations I have heard from you on this subject. Alas ! is it possible your mind can be changed, when your situation remains the same, and when it only depends upon yourself to render it more advantageous and more valuable to your fellow-creatures ?

The much-valued princess you have just lost, by not blessing you with children, placed you in a situation of irksome restraint. You are now at liberty to chuse another; and you may yet have an heir, whose existence will happily prevent the effusion of the blood and tears which a disputed succession, and the politics of the empire, may occasion. You have no choice as to the conduct it is your duty to adopt. All the cabinets of Europe have, at this moment, their eyes directed towards you. Ah! weigh well what you owe to yourself; think upon the bitter regret that will fill up the measure of your days, should you have just grounds for self-reproach; think upon the change

which the opinions of mankind will effect with regard to your moral and physical existence ; think, that as you are but a mortal, it is impossible you can assure yourself that the time will not come when you may regret such an act ; think that, while you remain sovereign, you possess the power, at any time, of ceasing to continue so. The bands of Hymen, I know, displease you ; but it is our sex alone by whom they are to be dreaded. Your sex and your rank allow you every relaxation, in which you can wish to indulge. To preserve appearances at home, and decency in public, compose the circle of your duties ; and slight failings can never be put in competition with the respect, the esteem, and attachment,

that a brave and magnanimous sovereign never fails to inspire. Finally, remember that it is your most inviolable friend who implores you to do justice to yourself; that it is a friend who has never deceived you; that it is one, whose language, at this moment, is the same she has ever addressed to you. You know my soul; you know, perhaps, better than any one, that no idea of hatred, revenge, or interest, have ever sullied it. I want nothing of you. I can never see you more. I have but a short time to live. My only object is, to prove to you that I have never ceased to respect you, and to interest myself in your glory.

14th March, 1791.

ADVICE

TO MY YOUNG FRIEND.

It is only that we may undergo more or less suffering, and die sooner or later, that we are brought into existence. I have fulfilled my principal task, by sixty-seven years of fatigue, by sickness and sorrows of every description, without any assistance but my courage, without any alleviation, save a few moments of illusion. The recent miseries which have come upon me, have sensibly weakened my organs, and have given me the signal to prepare for the last struggle which nature has imposed. It is to you, O my God! I pray to give me strength to support

that moment which human nature, ever ignorant and fearful, cannot contemplate without terror. If, in the hour of weakness, of bodily infirmity, or mental derangement, some murmurs have escaped me, deign to pardon them. I know that I have deserved to suffer more than I have suffered ; that the good I have enjoyed has been far beyond my demerits ; and that I ought to pour out my heart in thankfulness for your mercies towards me. Pardon the errors into which my passions or inexperience have betrayed me. Your all-seeing eye has searched the inmost recesses of my heart. You know my gratitude for your bounties, and my resignation to your decrees ; my detestation of vice and guilt ; my love for my

fellow-creatures, my repentance for my follies, and the constant prayers I have addressed to you, to enlighten my understanding, and inspire me with a just sense of my duties. If I have erred by the simple and pure worship by which I have endeavoured to make myself acceptable in your sight,—if my weak reason has turned me aside from the path I ought to have pursued, my fault has been involuntary : and I should fear to offend you, if for a moment I despaired of your mercy.

Firmly convinced of the existence of a Supreme Being, of his justice and goodness, I shall render to him that life he has given me, purified by a sincere devotion to his service. It is to you,

my dearest Paulina, I shall consecrate the few moments that remain for me. Your confidence and friendship have furnished me with the means of reading your soul ; — it is formed to virtue. The equality of your disposition, your prudence, the decency of your conversation and deportment, have ever imparted the highest degree of pleasure to me : the amiable manners you possess, and the interesting qualities of your mind, render you dear to my heart.

Retired within the bosom of a family, whose respected ancestors nourished and protected my youth, and every individual of which I cherish ; it is by their confidence in me, by the li-

berty they have given me of making choice of you as my friend, that you are become the wife, the sister, the mother of all that compose it. These titles necessarily double my affection for you. Be assured, therefore, I consider you as my own daughter, and that it is my most ardent wish to see you enjoying, and worthy to enjoy, every earthly happiness.

I am persuaded that in a few years your own reflections will so improve your intellectual faculties, that you will not be under the necessity of resorting to any one for advice ; but, on the contrary, that you will become a model for others. It is the object of my friendship to anticipate this period,

Suffer my experience to warn you of the danger of habit, and the errors you will be liable to, by trusting to the justice and pretended good will of mankind ; let me prevent you from depending upon the insufficient protection of even a good conscience, which but too often may furnish malignity with arms to work your destruction. For a woman to become truly happy, she must incessantly act in such a manner as to be cherished and beloved by her family, and respected by the world. If she has done this, she may contemplate her own soul without inquietude, without shame, and without remorse. That she may not be liable to be the victim of deception, she must study the character of every one who

approaches her,—she must endeavour to develope the reason of all she hears said, and of all she sees done,—she must explore every cause that may have influenced the conduct or peculiar situation of those with whom she is any ways connected.

Friendship, love, and gallantry, are the fundamental bases of all society. You may know the first by the constant equality of disposition and countenance of the person who professes it ; by his continual attentions, divested of mystery, and at the same time spontaneous ; by his services and good offices, rendered without ostentation or parade ; by his mildly but frankly advising you as to your defects or failings ; by his

sentiments of kindness and complacency with regard to whatever may be dear or valuable to you ; and, finally, by the confidence he may repose in you,

True love is rare ;—perhaps it no longer exists. Such are our manners, that we have only preserved its name, which is falsely applied to those fleeting and transitory connections, formed by the illusion of the senses, the want of reflection, the dictates of vanity, and the desertion of every principle of honour, and every idea of modesty. True love can only arise and be nourished in a virtuous soul : it is ever timid, modest, and respectful ; it equally conceals its pleasure and its pain ; you

may know it by the depression or the the vivacity of its features, by its embarrassment in expressing itself, by its fear of displeasing, its constant endeavours to guess at and anticipate the wishes of its object, and by the profound silence it observes with regard to its feelings. Situated as you are, he who should make you a formal declaration of his love could never be actuated by a real passion ;—this sentiment must have for its basis esteem and respect. He who expresses it, expects the object of his admiration to return his passion ; but the man who hopes for such a return from a married woman, must have ceased either to esteem or respect her.

I am not surprised at the depravity

of our present manners. A youth has scarce left the college before he sets up for a man of the world. Following the example of his equals, he abandons himself, without reflection, to the dangers of the table, women, and gaming; his horses, his curricule, and his ridiculous and fantastical dress, are the only objects of his studies. By the time he is out of his minority, all that remains to him is an accumulation of debt, the head of a coxcomb or a fool, the heart of a libertine, and the exhausted frame of an old man. How can such a man adorn the character of a husband or a father?

The education of our sex is not much better. Ignorant governesses, and hypocritical devotees, are entrusted with

the task of. “teaching our young ideas
“how to shoot.” What just principles or notions of propriety can we derive from such characters? The generality of the mothers of families are careless or dissipated, and often worse ; and they think they perform their duty by giving us masters to instruct us in dancing, music, geography, &c. Such acquirements certainly have their utility. I agree also, that to learn the catechism, and the epistles and gospels, by heart, exercise the memory;—but the knowledge of good and evil, the knowledge of the world in which we are to live, the duties of humanity, the obligations we owe society as wives and mothers, are far more important ; yet who instructs in these ?—No one.

Children are married without ever consulting their hearts : the conveniences and arrangements of rank and fortune are alone considered. Consequently, it must be very difficult to unite two beings who are unfavourable to each other in disposition, who can continue the illusions which made their first acquaintance agreeable, or who can fulfil the physical and moral duties which are required of them. When we are first introduced to the world, it is natural to endeavour to contract an intimacy with those we may meet, and with whom we are to live. When we are told of the qualities of such a person, we are, at the same time, informed of their lovers or their mistresses. It is said, “ that they go

to church together, that they meet in the same box at the theatre, they are seen in the same coach ;” yet we find that their husbands scarcely concern themselves upon the subject. The lover of the wife is treated with all possible familiarity by the husband, and the mistress of the husband is upon terms of intimacy with the wife. We necessarily conclude that what every one does cannot be reprehensible ; on the contrary, that it would be ridiculous not to act like the rest of the world. Our education forms us to sensibility ; but, at the same time, it makes us coquettes, and fills our minds with vanity. Neglected by our husbands, pressed by seducers, advised by women who cannot bear to see us more

virtuous than themselves, influenced by the necessity of loving, the pride of pleasing, and the desire of revenging, we yield, and are undone.

There are, nevertheless, many women strictly virtuous. A good education, a soul naturally pure and independent, a sound judgment, a tranquil temper, and a constant guard over her own thoughts and actions, will conduct any woman in the paths of virtue. The number of them are not considerable, but still they exist. I have met with about six, four of whom are still alive, and you have formed an acquaintance with two of them at my house.

However I may have been hurried away by the follies of the world, yet I have never approached a virtuous and estimable woman without experiencing a sentiment of respect for her, and regret for myself. It is, perhaps, owing to the desire I have of justifying their indulgence and friendship towards me that I owe the display of the few good qualities nature has given me.

Among the number of women who stray from the paths of virtue, there are some more or less culpable than others. Weakness is ever a misfortune and a fault, but it is not always a crime or a vice: it may be pardoned if it is founded in inexperience and ex-

ample, and the party atones by not falling into it a second time. In what I say to you, my dear Paulina, reflect that my precepts are addressed only to married women, or those who, from their situations in life, expect to become such. Without this, my own words would condemn me, and my lesson would be lost. There is a material difference between giving away one's own estate and disposing of that of another. I was always free, and my own mistress; a married woman is not so; and what in me would amount merely to an error, in her would be a crime.

You possess the advantages of a correct and cultivated judgment, a delicate and virtuous soul. You love your

husband. These considerations induce me to hope you will never be seduced from your duty ; but be cautious how you suffer your vanity to impress you with a belief that you are in no danger. Envy constantly follows the steps of every woman who is either distinguished for titles, riches, talents, or her amiable and virtuous qualities. She spies them out, and strews her venom in their way. The hope of a coxcomb, the observations of a fool, the calumny of the wicked, are eagerly seized hold of by her. In order to defeat her attacks, you should neither be too forward nor too prudish. You may be easy of access, and indulge in a proper freedom of conversation ; but let your deportment indicate that you can-

not admit of rudeness or familiarity. Never listen to histories of the transactions of your acquaintance, except in secret, and then only from persons whom you esteem. Never suffer in public any one who is absent to be injured, ridiculed, or insulted, in your presence, even though it should be your enemy or your rival. Defend the person, whoever it may be, from such unjustifiable attacks. If you cannot do that, desire the conversation may be changed. Such a mode of conduct will ensure you the esteem of the world, and the gratitude of those you shall have defended. If envy can ever be disarmed, it is by the constant practice of every virtue; but it is chiefly for the sake of our own inward satis-

faction that we ought to be good, just, humane, and beneficent. The soul which has no reproaches to make itself enjoys a serenity so pure and consoling, that I not only cannot conceive how any one can do ill, but also how it is possible to breathe for an instant without seeking the means of doing good. You will doubtless tell me, that if such are my sentiments, how can I allow of any one's entertaining so low a passion as suspicion. I believe that it is injurious to those who inspire us with it. I believe that a character naturally suspicious is at least susceptible of those vices it suspects in others. However, consult the present moment : is it the love of humanity, disinterestedness, and justice, that have

produced the two incredible revolutions of France?

Two ill-organized brains conceived the plan; but that immense number of co-operators, that banditti, collected from every quarter, laying waste the country, destroying distinctions, burning castles, and carrying misery and carnage in their train, were they only the instruments? Without a plan, the result of several years, could there have been formed magazines of arms, cloaths, and ammunition, of every kind? Could it have been without a settled plan, that Paris was surrounded by 20,000 soldiers? Was it to re-establish our finances that M. Neckar was dismissed, and M. De Calonne recalled? Was it

to serve the people that orders were given to fire upon them? Was it without intending mischief that M. de Lambese, accompanied by hussars and dragoons, and supported by a detachment of the Swiss guards, came to sabre and kill the citizens, while they were taking the air in the Tuileries? Was it out of love and respect for the king that he was deceived by every possible means, and exposed to the loss of his life and throne? Ah! my dear Paulina, it is impossible to resist such evidence: wickedness influences the greater part of mankind. Let us, however, not suspect or accuse any without proof; but let us be upon our guard against all. Study the characters of all who approach you, contemplate the annals

of the world, and you will be forced to acknowledge that nothing is so common as vice, nothing so rare as virtue. You must not, on that account, be disheartened: it is by the difficulty of the enterprize that greatness of courage is manifested.

The time approaches when you may easily display, and even increase, the virtues of which you are susceptible. The education of your daughter will be the touchstone of your life. You cannot instruct her yourself, but you may prepare the way. You may facilitate her future acquirements, by studying her disposition and character, by engaging her to attend to the instruction she receives, by exercising all that

patience which infancy requires, and by inspiring her with a firm conviction that her confidence, respect, and attachment towards you will contribute to the happiness of her own life as well as yours. It requires as much courage as address to give a daughter a proper education. I know you to have been a good child ; I know you are a good woman, a good mistress of a family, a good friend : I flatter myself you will also be a good mother. I trust you will impose it as a law upon yourself, not to be departed from, never to show passion or ill humour ; that you will reprehend with mildness and sensibility. Let your caresses, your favours, your indulgence, and encomiums, reward the efforts of your

child. Never submit your own will to hers ; neither exact any thing from her without giving her a reason for so doing. By these means you will give her a notion of your own character ; you will form hers on the basis of goodness, confidence, and respect, and you will enable her to class her ideas, and improve them with the greater facility. I presume it is your intention to superintend, as much as possible, the lessons your daughter will receive. Your presence will excite her emulation, and will prevent her masters neglecting her. Even a mother may derive some instruction by her attention ; for it is not to be supposed she is all-sufficient. The manner in which women pass their time in the world in-

duces a forgetfulness of their early acquirements, which an attention to the instructions given their children may recover. Children who have fortunes to depend upon need only learn what is sufficient to make them agreeable in the world, or is necessary to enable them to support their moments of solitude. To excel in any science, it is necessary to apply the mind to it without attending to any other subject. So laborious an application is only necessary to him who means to make it his profession.

Had I children, I would certainly have them learn to dance; it gives ease and elegance to the deportment, it enables a person to enter a room, salute

the company, walk, and even sit with grace and dignity, I should not expect them to be sufficiently instructed in music, to sing or play at sight. To form their ear and their taste, to enable them to know the extent of their voice, to make them sensible of the charms of melody, and the harshness of discord, and to give them science enough to learn an agreeable easy air, is all I wish.

The harp is a charming instrument in the hands of a woman who possesses a fine voice and a graceful person;—but it may occasion defects in the shape; it fatigues the lungs and hurts the voice. I cannot approve of it.

The piano-forte seems to me to be the most agreeable instrument. I would have it so far studied, that its difficulties should be felt and appreciated, but I would not recommend the attempt to surmount them. To play a few pieces with facility, to be able to employ a leisure hour, is all that is necessary. It is neither worth while to exhaust the time, the memory, or the genius of children, in attaining a talent which they may very well do without.

That which it is necessary to learn them fundamentally is their own language. It is shameful to be ignorant of the signification, the value, the gender, and the pronunciation of the words they hear and speak. The more a per-

son knows of his own language, the more his mind expands ; the choice of words not only adds to eloquence, but renders what is said more expressive, commanding, and agreeable ; the modulation which each word requires imparts a thousand and a thousand charms to speech. He who is acquainted with his own language never pronounces between his teeth, or cuts short the syllables ;—he avoids monotony, and whatever may offend delicate ears, or those matured by experience.

Whosoever is acquainted with language, is acquainted necessarily with orthography. I know that ignorance in this respect is looked upon as a mark of good breeding among the female sex ; but I

entreat you to excite your daughter to that noble pride which disdains to be so distinguished.

Be attentive to her writing ; endeavour that she may write so that every one may be able to read it. Nothing can be more fatiguing to a person who receives a letter, than to be obliged to seek the meaning of the words one after another. There can be no style so bad as not to be rendered still worse by bad writing. Lines blotted through, and characters impossible to be decyphered, are an evident proof of a negligent and careless writer.

Our books of history, tedious even to ourselves, would be insupportable to our

children. I advise you to let yours have at first the best abridgements you can procure, and such books of private biography as are most likely to excite their curiosity. Make them explain them to you—assist their endeavours to do so. Let no trait of virtue, heroism, or humanity, pass without a proper eulogium. Never lose an opportunity of painting the dangers of vice ; and the horror it inspires. Urge the importance of continual reading, in order that they may the better comprehend what they have read. In the second class of study I place geography. As a recreation, allow them to read tragedy, which will recall to their minds the real histories they have read. Children dislike what is imposed on them

as a duty. What they are only permitted to read as a recreation excites their attention. Make them sometimes amuse your leisure by reading a fable, a poem, or detached moral pieces easy to remember. Avoid romances and fairy tales,—they exalt the head and the heart too much.

Have the address to make them wish to learn drawing ;—it is a sweet resource in solitude. It is agreeable to be a good judge of pictures and prints ; and whatever is agreeable has its use in the world.

Do not, my dearest Paulina, imagine I am dictating laws to you. I have no children, consequently what is necessary to their education can never have

been the object of my researches: it may be, that my short observations do not possess common sense. I however submit them to your reason: if they are good, follow them; if they are not, admit they are at least the ravings of an affectionate soul, of one who wishes to contribute to your happiness, and whose sad and wretched life is only rendered supportable by thinking of you.

I surely cannot be wrong in desiring that your daughter should make choice of you as her confidante and best friend. Spare no pains to make her do so,—it will ensure the happiness and repose of both. As we are more delicate, more sensible, and more moderate in our sentiments than the men, it is reserved to us to give examples of those

pure and mild duties which nature commands. The mother who refuses them, and the daughter who despises them, must be monsters.

You are still far, my dearest Paulina, from that fatal period, when we are forced to acknowledge that all our pleasures are vanished ; but when your daughter has arrived at maturity, and attracts the attention of the world, then will your pretensions be terminated, and her age will be the register of your own. The better to prepare yourself against this critical moment, I must inform you in what manner I acted.

I was forty years of age before I perceived the least alteration, for the worse,

in my figure : whether it was that the style of dress, which the characters I performed required, favoured the illusions of others ; whether those illusions were kept up by the variety of personages I represented ; whether it was the effect of the passions I so accurately depicted ; or whether it was owing to the deception of the theatre ; yet so the fact was. All my friends thought me charming, and my lover doted on me to distraction. In short, I had lost none of my self-admiration. One day, when I was actuated by more than my usual desire to please, I wished to add to my charms by the aid of one of those very elegant dresses which we always kept in reserve, and which generally excited admiration when we appeared in them.

Constantly viewing myself in the glass, to see if my hair was well dressed, I thought my maid had neglected her duty, and that she meant to make me look less handsome than usual. However, I desired her to give me the cap which was to complete the elegance of my appearance ; but whatever way I put it on, I was dissatisfied. I threw it from me, and tried twenty others ; but none of them could please me. I examined myself more attentively, and observed several wrinkles on my forehead, in the corners of my eyes, and about my neck ; my teeth had lost much of their whiteness, my lips their vermilion, and my eyes their brilliancy ; yet, unhappily, I found myself perfectly well all the time. Compelled to acknowledge that it was neither the fault

of my waiting-maid or my cap, but that it was myself who was no longer the same, I burst into tears. What weakness! you will say. Alas! No. My happiness depended on my ability of pleasing. My reason dictated to me no more to pretend to it. This was a dreadful misfortune. My grief lasted six months; it was the more painful, inasmuch as I was obliged to conceal the cause of it. But, from the moment of this cruel discovery, I determined to observe the utmost simplicity in my dress, flattering myself I should, by that means, escape minute examination. Criticism and envy ought, at least, to be silent with regard to those who do justice to themselves. I no longer expected those attentions I had received. By redoubling, on my part, the atten-

tions of love, I ceased to speak its language, and, insensibly, I repressed its desires. My conduct was remarked—I was asked the reason of it—my lover was affected by the one I gave him. I obtained five years further enjoyment of that heart, the possession of which numbers disputed with me, and which the acquisition of a considerable fortune at last deprived me of.

Make your own reflections on this, my dearest Paulina. By the time we have arrived at the age of thirty, the men have the folly to consider us as old, and to blame those manners in us which they pretend they have a right to assume, even when they are the victims of the most disgusting decrepitude. This injustice is more deserv-

ing pity than anger ;—let it, therefore, not offend you. It is your vanity, your delicacy, and your reason, you must consult, in order to know what you may still justly pretend to. It is impossible not to perceive that each day deprives you of a charm ; but your soul, exercised by time and experience, will assuredly replace them by its virtues. Those virtues will secure you an empire more pleasing and more permanent than that of beauty.

In your commerce with the world, do not evince that foolish dissipation, that levity of mind, which is satisfied with a cursory observation of what one meets with. There is nothing so insignificant but your reason and your judgment may acquire some profit from it.

We may always derive improvement from each other. If you have not studied the character of the person you wish to serve, you have not taken the proper method to gain him to your interest,

It is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to read the hearts of mortals; but their actions and speech will at least learn you what they wish to appear. Compare and unite these appearances with what you may trace by other means, and you will soon discover the character you wish to know.

In examining attentively, you will find there are very few families where virtue is hereditary; and that where vice prevails, the children are generally more

vicious than their parents. You will find that the character of the father is often decisive of that of the son. It is expected that the son of a brave and gallant man, or the daughter of an amiable and modest woman, will introduce peace and honour into those families that adopt them. This favourable, or unfavourable prejudice, may extend more or less over a virtuous or a vicious family. In all the events of life, that which comes recommended by one who is without reproach is sure to possess the greatest weight. Nothing can equal the ascendancy of a virtuous woman : she commands obedience from all who surround her.

You have an infinite share of natural ability. Cultivate it. Endeavour not

to pass a day without improving yourself by reading. Morals, history, belles lettres, and a few choice novels, are sufficient to instruct women in their duties, to distinguish them in the world, and employ their minds in solitude. The licentiousness of the press unhappily inundates Europe with calumnious libels, dictated by crime and misery. Do not waste your time in reading such a mass of falsehoods and absurdities. They are sometimes so contrary to truth, and founded on such ridiculous arguments, that it is surprising any one should have the audacity to avow them. A position is assumed, without any thing to justify it, and the public defend and support it. Avoid this danger. The woman who enters into disputes goes beyond her sphere ;

and it is obvious that none but those who intrigue by profession, or who have had long experience, can, by their observations, elucidate the audacity of guilt, the resources of ambition, and the intricacies of politics.

You may make a much better use of your time : you have an extensive establishment in your household to superintend. Occupy yourself with whatever may promote order, economy, and peace.

Your husband is a descendant of one of those honest characters who, distinguished for candour, frankness, and disinterestedness, thought it always his duty to offer the fatted calf to the first who presented himself, and whose pure

soul rejected all ideas of suspicion. Times are altered, and we must alter with them. Formerly people invited each other but seldom, the entertainments they gave were of short duration, the guests were satisfied at a small expense. At present treats and invitations are given daily ; and, whatever fortune we may possess, if we do not carefully attend to our expenses, if we do not have an eye over the rapacity of our domestics, and repress their cupidity and profusion, we may be soon ruined or reduced to difficulties. Every wise person ought so to arrange his affairs, as to have something to lay by at the end of the year, as a provision against want. With this precaution, you will be able to supply unforeseen expenses ; to make an advantageous purchase, if

such a one should offer ; to promote the establishment of your children, or procure the inestimable happiness of rendering yourself serviceable to your friend.

By despising frivolity of behaviour ; by observing order in your personal expenses ; added to a few years experience of the disposition and inclinations of your husband, and of the manner in which your family ought to be conducted, you will obtain that confidence which is due to you.

In order that a family may be well conducted, it is necessary that the husband should have the inspection and conduct of affairs abroad, and the wife the inspection and conduct of every

thing at home. At the end of a certain time, married people have not many things to talk about. By rendering mutual accounts of their labours to each other, they will have useful and interesting subjects of conversation, which may increase their esteem and confidence, and give birth to sentiments of friendship and regard, as pleasing and certainly more durable than those of the senses.

In order for a woman to obtain consequence in her own house, it is necessary strangers should know she commands in it, and that she regulates its whole economy. It is in this, her understanding, her attention to those duties which belong to her, and the confidence her husband reposes in her, are manifested. She is better served, and

more respected by all her domestics : her children even are more submissive to her. By conducting herself with mildness, prudence, and firmness, she will form an empire to herself, which, I admit, will cost her some sacrifices in her youth. But youth soon passes away. Its illusions are succeeded by such fatal consequences, and our old age is so long, that we want something to recompense us. The desire of governing others increases so with our years, that we ought to lament no sacrifice that affords a prospect of obtaining it.

You will, by following these precepts, acquire the completest authority over your family and household. Nothing will be done without consulting you, without your free consent. In

short, if you will make yourself useful to your domestic concerns, your husband will be your friend; but if you do not, he will be your master. It is for you to chuse. Think only that the self-denials, or disappointments of youth, are like the stroke of a butterfly's wing, which the least pleasure will efface the remembrance of; but that those of age are as the stab of a poniard, whose wound is ever bleeding a-fresh.

If your taste and inclinations are congenial to the plan I have laid down, if circumstances allow you to pursue it, I dare answer for the happiness of your whole life. That life, virtuously and honourably employed, will shield you from the dangers of the world; it will confirm the health of your body, and

ensure the peace of your soul; it will secure to you, what few women possess, the respect, the esteem, the tenderness and affection, of all around you.

On the point of descending to the grave, I can never enjoy those pleasures I have instructed you how to acquire; but, by following the advice my tender and unfeigned friendship has given you, it depends on you to prolong my moral existence, and to enable my heart to participate in the delights of which yours is susceptible. O, my dearest Paulina! it depends on you to make the remainder of my life happy. Can you ever consent to destroy the only hope I have left of consolation in this world?

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